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Lord Chesterfield's Theory of Education

English

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LORD CHESTERFIELD'S THEORY OF EDUCATION

BY

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Ph. B. Blackburn University, 1911

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THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of

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DEGREE OF *Master of Arts.*

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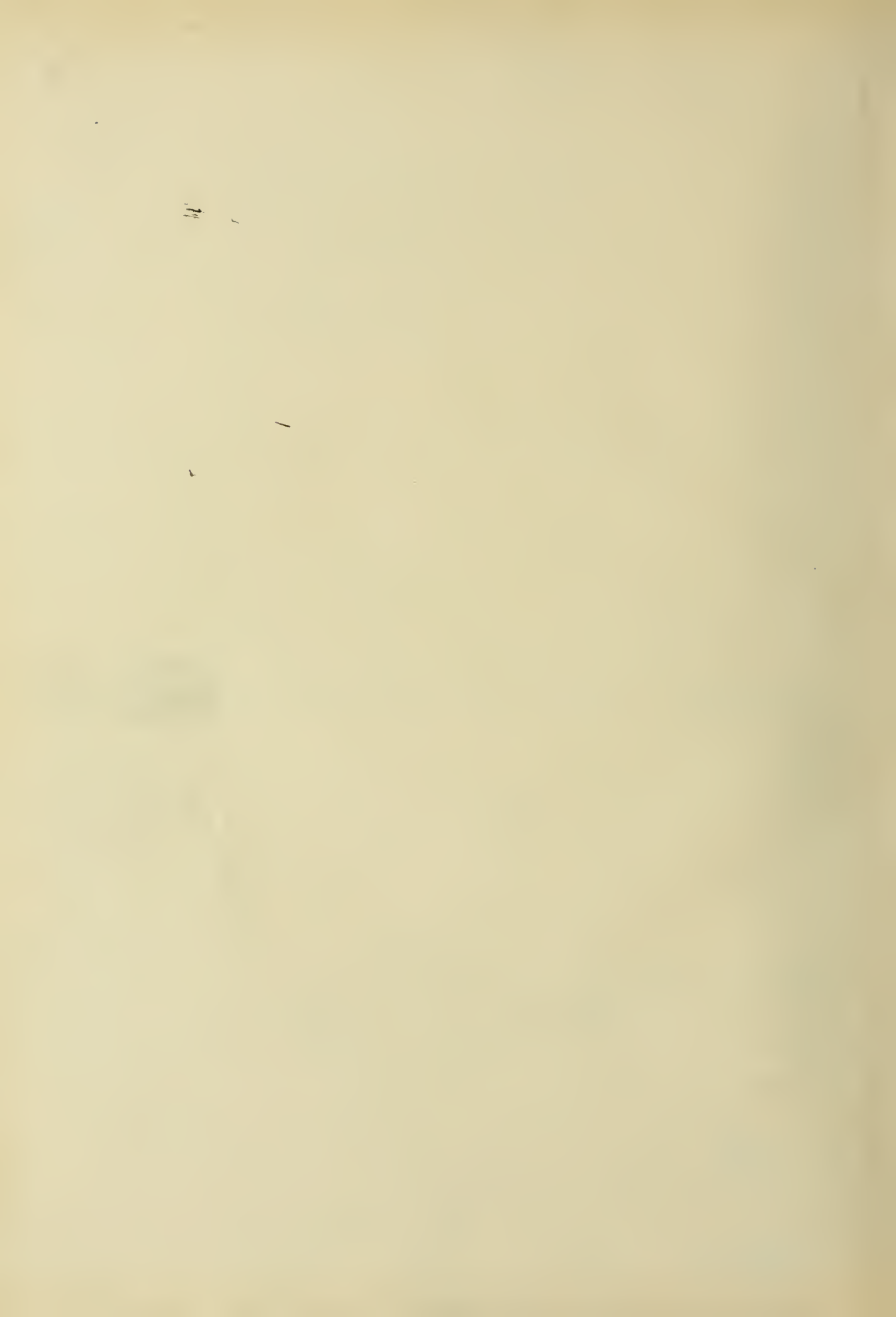
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## LORD CHESTERFIELD'S THEORY OF EDUCATION.

## Introduction.

Lord Chesterfield,<sup>1</sup> orator, statesman, wit, man of the world and of fashion, holds an interesting position as having expressed in literary form, the characteristic ideas of the typical 18th century gentleman. A contemporary of Johnson, Addison, Pope and Swift, in England, and of Voltaire and Montesquieu in France, he, though a less shining light in literature than these, has expressed, better than any of them, some of the ideas of his age. His chief claim to literary reputation at the present day, lies in a series of personal letters, written to his son. From these Letters we may obtain a theory of education, which embodies many of the classical principles of the 18th century.

Chesterfield's ambition in the education of his son was to make of him an "omnis homo,"<sup>2</sup> an "all accomplished man."<sup>3</sup> This was to be brought about by (1) proper religious and moral training, (2) the acquisition of knowledge, and (3) good breeding, and careful instruction in

1. Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield. Born-1694; Died-1773. Held offices of Lord Steward, Ambassador at The Hague, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Secretary of State: In Parliament delivered speeches on Licensing Bill, Gin Act, and Calendar Reform.
2. Letters to Son-Ed. Sayle-Camelot Series. p 124.
3. Letters to Son-Sayle-p 100.





manners. With these three sides properly developed, the pupil would approach that ideal of perfection at which he aimed.<sup>1</sup>

The destination which he had planned for his son was that of politics - a speaker in Parliament at home, and a minister to foreign courts. The boy's education from infancy was directed especially for that end, and never was the intention lost sight of, for an instant, throughout the period of his youth.

Chesterfield's great care in providing for his son's education was expressive not only of his deep paternal affection, and interest in the boy's welfare, but also, to a certain extent, of his desire to prove the truth of his own theories.<sup>2</sup> He was convinced that education had more effect than nature in the development of character,<sup>3</sup> and was determined that he should have the very best to be found at whatever cost. "Whatever wisdom, love, wealth, troops of friends, the power of literature, and the grace of courts, could do to inform and improve was done for him."<sup>4</sup> The father, even when weighed down with the cares of a State, spent hours in planning for his education, and in writing letters of advice for his benefit.

1. Letters to Son-Bradshaw; 1893-p 23.
2. Letters to Friends-Maty-1778, Vol.II. p 142.
3. Letters to Son-Ed.Bradshaw-1893 - p 263.
4. Blackwood's Magazine, May, 1868-p 526.



The boy was sent to the best of schools -- to Westminster first, for general and classical knowledge, then to Leipsig for political training, and finally to Turin in Italy, to complete his studies, and acquire culture. A large school, Chesterfield thought, was, everything considered, better for one who was to live among men, as more worldly sagacity could be obtained there<sup>1</sup> than at a small institution. The latter however, has the advantage of better teaching in morals and manners.<sup>2</sup>

The masters whom he employed were always the best to be found. He spared no expense in the securing of famous instructors for the boy wherever he went. Dr. Maty reminds us that his judgment as to the best seems to have been faulty in one particular instance, for the man who was the boy's guide through almost the whole period of his travels, Mr. Harte, was ill-suited to the purpose Chesterfield had in mind. He taught the boy learning indeed, but at the expense of other things equally important in the father's sight.<sup>3</sup> It was one of the mistakes which even the wisest of people are likely to make occasionally, and Chesterfield seems to have forgotten that "the pupil's character is unconsciously formed after the model of his instructor."<sup>4</sup>

1. Letters to A.C. Stanhope-Oxford 1890, p 360.

2. Letters to Friends, Maty-Vol.II - 474.

3. Memoirs of Lord Chesterfield-Maty-Vol.I-171.

4. North American Review, July, 1896-Cardinal Gibbon.





One of the essential factors in Chesterfield's system of education is travel. He sent his son abroad while only a boy of fourteen, to travel through most of the European countries. Seven years in all were spent, part of which time was passed at school, and in learning the languages. The real object of travel, Chesterfield thought, is to give one a knowledge of the world, which could be acquired only in that way. This practical knowledge, together with that of the customs, manners, government and languages of the countries through which he passed, is of more importance to him than anything else he could learn. In each country, he had him study also, those things which could best be learned in that particular place, as law in Germany, grace and culture in Italy, and in Paris, that polish, which can be acquired at no other place in the world, to such an extent.

As an evidence of his care while he was on his travels and in school, Chesterfield kept in constant touch with his son, by means of frequent letters. In these he gave him advice upon subjects in which he thought him deficient, such as manners and knowledge of the world; he "endeavored to assist his youth with his own experience";<sup>1</sup> he corrected his faults; sometimes he merely wrote information along different lines, which he thought his son should have; and

1. Letters to Son-Sayle-213.



he personally selected, and sent to him, poems, dramas, and books for him to read and study.

These letters were not written for publication. They are personal letters, written without any conscious effort, and intended only to be useful to the one to whom they were sent, and not meant for public perusal.<sup>1</sup> Had Chesterfield known that his literary fame would ever rest upon them, he would doubtless have made them very different in some respects, for he often writes freely his opinion upon men and things which he says he would be very unwilling that anybody else should know.<sup>2</sup> Those things also, which appear at first sight, to be over-emphasised in the letters are, we learn from people who knew both the boy and his father, enforced because of the boy's conspicuous lack of them. The letters were adapted to the special needs of a special person. Nevertheless there are many things in them which apply equally to the education of all persons. Such are the general methods of instruction which he follows.

Chesterfield's precepts for study are the time-honored ones of attention to the matter in hand;<sup>3</sup> employment of the whole time,<sup>4</sup> and thoroughness in study. He urges his son never to give up a subject until he has made himself

1. Letters to Godson-Carnarvon, Knickerbocker Press-Vol. II, p 81.

2. Letters to Son-Bradshaw-154.

3. " " " " -22.

4. " " " Sayle-30





thoroughly master of it:<sup>1</sup> "Approfondisez vous"<sup>2</sup> is one of his favorite maxims. "Certum pete finem" he urges, "and pursue one object invariably till you have attained it."<sup>3</sup> He insists upon method in study, and in the use of time. He advises his son to keep a note book,<sup>4</sup> and memoranda of all kinds of knowledge; and approves of the method of summing up what has been learned, at the end of each day.<sup>5</sup>

His modes of accomplishing the desired end in the teaching of the pupil are various. Persuasion,<sup>6</sup> ridicule,<sup>7</sup> and reward<sup>8</sup> are common ones. High expectations of the pupil,<sup>9</sup> appeal to his vanity,<sup>10</sup> and love of excelling his fellows<sup>11</sup> are, he thinks, perhaps the best ways of all. He believes in appealing to the reason<sup>12</sup> also, even of a very small child:<sup>13</sup> Praise<sup>14</sup> is a good stimulus, to encourage a person, and to urge him on to better things; and everybody should be told of his faults, so that he may be able to correct them.<sup>15</sup>

1. Letters to Son-Sayle-80
2. " " " " -60
3. " " " " -347.
4. " " " " -155.
5. " " A.C.Stanhope, Carnarvon-Oxford-345.
6. Ibid. " " " -350
7. Ibid.
8. Letters to Godson, Carnarvon.K.P. Vol II-15.-
9. " " " " K.P. Vol II-201.
10. " " A.C.Stanhope " Oxford, 361,339.
11. " " Son-Sayle, p 20.
12. " " A.C.Stanhope-Oxford 1890-343.
13. " " Solomon Dayrolles-Katy-Vol.II -398.
14. " " Son-Sayle-30.
15. " " " " 78; Katy II. 447.



Corporal punishment<sup>1</sup> is to be used very little, and then only in case of vices and not mere childish tricks. It creates fear, and makes a child dull,<sup>2</sup> and if used often, will harden him to punishment,<sup>3</sup> and do no good. It is always a last resort. Even threats,<sup>4</sup> and chiding should not be used often. Chesterfield, in practice, as well as in theory, believes in dealing with all people "Savviter in modo, fortiter in re."<sup>5</sup>

1. Letters to Solomon Dayrolles-Maty-II-339.
2. " " A.C.Stanhope-Oxford-330,350.
3. " " Solomon Dayrolles, Maty-II-107.
4. " " Godson-Carnarvon,K.P.-I.-107.
5. " " A.C.Stanhope, " Oxford-344.





## I.

C L A S S I C A L   L E A R N I N G.

Classical learning, Chesterfield, like all other educated men of his day, considered as one of the "things which every gentleman, independently of profession, should know." <sup>1</sup> His ideas of its value, however, differed somewhat essentially from the usual conceptions of the educators who had preceded him.

Instead of professing for its chief recommendation, the intrinsic value of the subject itself, he considered it of importance, in his educational scheme, chiefly because it was fashionable, and because every well-bred gentleman of his age was supposed to know it. "It is absolutely necessary for everybody," he writes to his son, "because everybody has agreed to think and call it so";<sup>2</sup> and "I would by no means have anything that is known to others be totally unknown to you".<sup>3</sup> He thought it an ornament rather than an essential, yet, "it is a most useful and necessary ornament",<sup>4</sup> and so servile is his regard for custom, that he thinks "it is shameful not to be master of the classics."

1. Letters to Son-Sayle-p-79.

2. Letters to Son-Bradshaw-'93-p-112.

3.       "       "       "       Sayle-p 242.

4. Son,-Sayle-p 65.



Aside from his mere desire to follow the beaten path of custom, he saw the social and intellectual prestige which classical learning gives to a man, in the eyes both of the learned and the uneducated. "Classical learning is esteemed necessary for a gentleman", he says, "and it is really useful - - - for his public character".<sup>1</sup> He, as an experienced man of the world, who had all his life mingled with and observed men, knew as well as anybody, that it was one of the attributes which go toward making one "admired and celebrated by mankind."<sup>2</sup> He wished to be considered learned himself, and it is characteristic of his great regard for appearances that he had painted a portrait of his godson, when a mere boy, "with the attributes of a man of learning and taste"<sup>3</sup> with an Anacreon, a Horace and a Cicero lying upon the table beside him.

His attitude toward the two divisions of the classics, Latin and Greek, differs somewhat essentially. Although he does not place Latin, that "plaything of a young gentleman",<sup>4</sup> in his catalogue of useful knowledge, he advises that in the education of all boys "some Latin be thrown

1. A.C. Stanhope, p 323.

2. Son-Sayle, p 9.

3. Godson-Oxford 1890, p 283.

4. Godson-Knickerbocker Press II.-1.





into the bargain, in compliance with custom." <sup>1</sup> He thinks "there is no great credit in knowing Latin, for everybody knows it; and it is only a shame not to know it". <sup>2</sup> This makes the study of it all the more necessary however, and he advises his little godson, "Poursuivez le toujours, car un homme qui n'entend pas le Latin parfaitement, passe toujours pour un ignorant", <sup>3</sup> and adds, perhaps to stimulate the boy's mind by a little threat, that if he wishes to ever be a Foreign Ambassador, he must learn it perfectly, "car on n'emploie jamais ceux qui ignorent ces choses nécessaires". <sup>4</sup>

He recommends the same careful study of Greek, but for a somewhat different reason. He considers the knowledge of it an accomplishment, which few people possess, and which therefore adds the more to the glory of the few who have it. "Pray mind your Greek particularly", he says, "for to know Greek very well, is to be really learned", <sup>5</sup> and again he says, "Employ your leisure --- in close application to your Greek, which so few gentlemen know any of, that it is a more shining ornament to those who do." <sup>6</sup>

1. Son-Sayle-278.
2. Ibid-Sayle-4.
3. Godson-K.P.-I-210.
4. Ibid.
5. Son-Sayle-4.
6. Godson-K.P.-II-274.



He believes the difficulty of learning the Greek language at the present day, makes it more of a merit for those who do learn it, for he says that in Horace's day, it was "much more easily and consequently less meritoriously learned, than it can be now."<sup>1</sup> "But its difficulty is no excuse for its neglect, for a man should always endeavor to distinguish himself by doing something more and better, than the generality of people of his own rank and situation in the world commonly do." <sup>2</sup>

"But the classics, moreover, aside from being ornamental, are occasionally useful."<sup>3</sup> A proper study of them ought to give a person a goodly share of that "Attic salt",<sup>4</sup> which makes his company so much relished. It adds to his conversational ability, by supplying subjects with which most people are acquainted, and of which, therefore he cannot afford to be ignorant; and truly "it is a great advantage for any man, to be able to talk neither ignorantly nor absurdly, upon any subject."<sup>5</sup> Chesterfield, who believed that the art of agreeable conversation is one of the greatest of all accomplishments, naturally valued any subject which would add to one's proficiency in it. "Stock your memory", he says, "with the

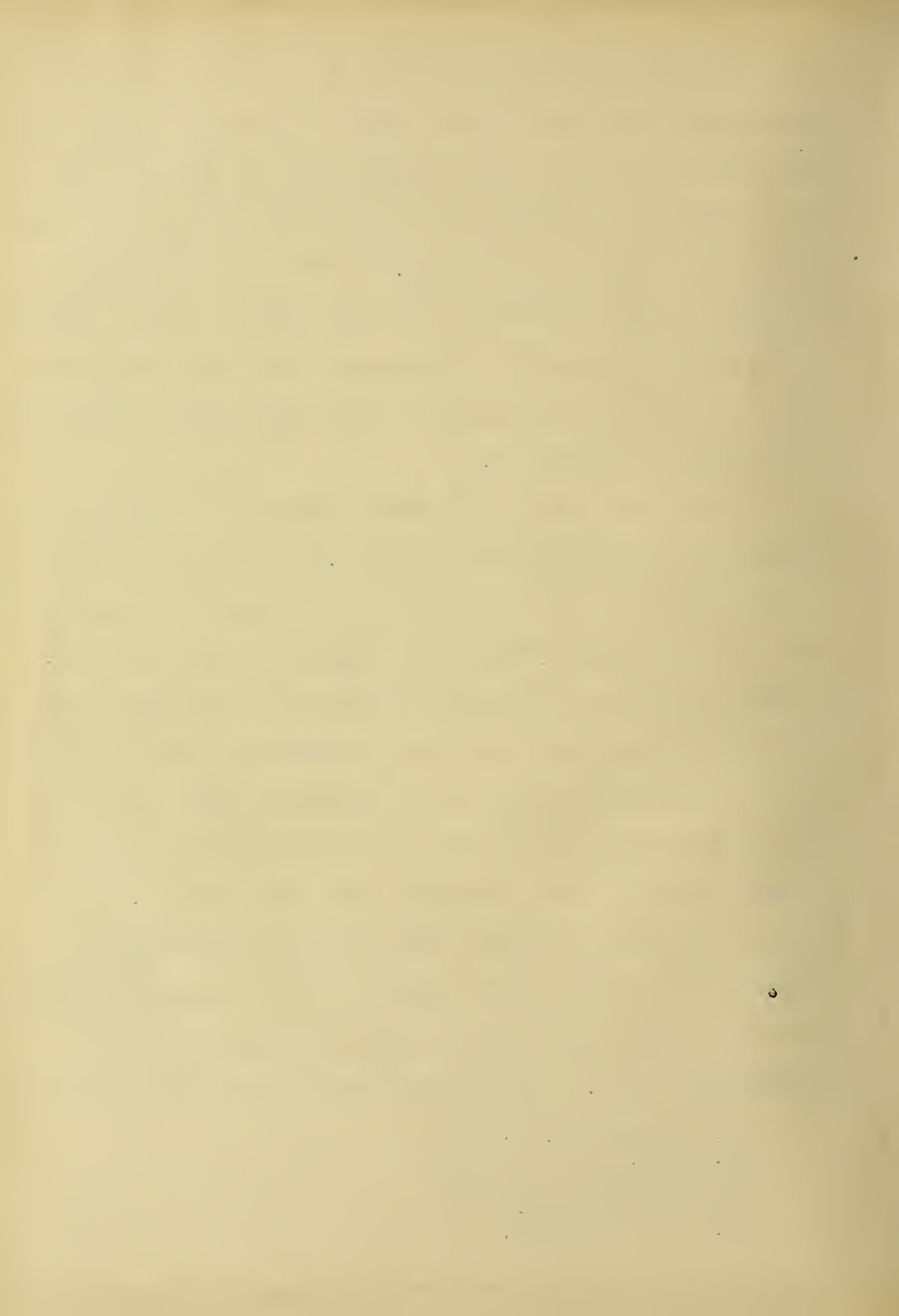
1. Godson-K.P.-II-274.

2. Ibid. "

3. Ibid. " II-174.

4. Son-Sayle-36.

5. " " -242.



most shining thoughts of the Ancients, which if correctly retained, and happily applied, often stand in the stead of wit, and are very pleasing in company."<sup>1</sup>

Another important use of the classics, which Chesterfield applies to Greek and Latin alone, but which with equal force might be applied to many of our modern classics also, is to form the taste of the growing child, so that he has no desire for books which are not uplifting. He does not fear that his son is in any great danger when he goes to Italy, of being dazzled and corrupted by the Italian "conchetti", because his "taste has been formed upon the best ancient models, the Greek and Latin writers of the best ages, who indulge themselves in none of these puerilities".<sup>2</sup>

Indeed he thinks the books which the child reads have much to do with his thoughts, and consequently, with his character; and that noble "extracts from the best authors --- will give a habit of thinking like them, that is, with spirit and justness."<sup>3</sup>

His keen mind did not lose sight of the fact that a knowledge of the classics made easy the study of the modern languages, which he considered very important in the education of his future diplomat. The knowledge of

1. Godson-K.P.-II-134.

2. Son-Sayle-161.

3. Godson-K.P.-II-177.





Latin would be useful also, to one who in a government position, might be called upon to read old documents and treaties, which would quite probably be written in that language.

The subjective pleasure which one derives from classical knowledge, however, is perhaps ~~to~~ the greatest argument in its favor. So great is this pleasure, that Chesterfield would withhold it from no one, but, contrary to the general spirit of the age, said that if he had a daughter, he would give her the same classical learning that he gave his boy, especially so, as it would help occupy her time, and thus keep her out of harm's way. <sup>1</sup>

He thinks that classical learning is "really useful for private amusement"<sup>2</sup> during all life, but most of all, in old age. Throughout the long period of his later life, when he was secluded from most of the pleasures of the world by deafness, and bodily infirmities, he found more and more pleasure in the studies which he had begun to love in youth. It is then that he says "My books, and only my books, are now left me, and I daily find what Cicero says of learning to be true: 'Haec studia adolescentiam alunt, senectutem oblectant, secundas res ornant, adversis perfugium ac solatium praebent, delectant domi, non

1. A.C.Stanhope-369.

2. A.C.Stanhope-(Oxford 1890)-323.



impediunt foris, pernoctant nobiscum, peregrinantur, rusticantur'." <sup>1</sup> Again he says, speaking of his lonely condition, almost solitary except for his close comradeship with these friends of his youth, "Knowledge is a comfortable and necessary retreat and shelter for us in an advanced age, and if we do not plant it while young, it will give us no shade when we grow old." <sup>2</sup> "Let me, therefore, most earnestly recommend to you to hoard up, while you can, a great stock of knowledge, --- what nobody can have too much of." <sup>3</sup> Once more he gives us an undeniable argument from personal experience, concerning the lasting pleasures to be obtained from an appreciation of the classics, when he says, "I planted, while young, that degree of knowledge which is now my refuge and my shelter. Make your plantations still more extensive; they will more than pay you for your trouble." <sup>4</sup>

The method which he employed in teaching this necessary study is to be discovered only by combining the chance remarks which are scattered throughout his letters and essays, and seems to be somewhat as follows:-

The boy's first knowledge of the classics was obtained from pictures from Ovid's Metamorphoses, which he

1. Son-Sayle-21.
2. Son-Sayle-52.
3. Son-Sayle-119.
4. Son-Sayle-59.





15.  
played with,<sup>1</sup> the stories and significance of which were of course explained by an older person. These, and occasional stories of the lives of some of the greatest ancients, were all that he learned until about his seventh year, when he began to study Latin itself.<sup>2</sup> He began Greek at about the same age.<sup>3</sup>

Chesterfield, unlike most of the writers on education up to his time, does not give us a clearly defined system for the study of Latin. We know that his godson began it according to the French method, but that this was soon discontinued. This method was quite extensively used at that time, and consisted only in "knowing a great many Latin words and some Latin phrases, by rote, but without grammar or syntax".<sup>4</sup> Of this method, Chesterfield had the following to say, "Mr. Locke approves of it, though I confess I do not,"<sup>5</sup> and although he allowed his godson to begin the study in this way, he said that he must soon "contrive some more solid method"<sup>6</sup> for him. As he had himself learned Latin first according to that method, he knew its difficulties in the way of progress, for "when I went to Cambridge" he says, "I was obliged to go through all the drugery of grammer and parsing."<sup>7</sup>

1. Godson I-K.P.-92.

2. A.C.Stanhope-336.

3. Son-4. (Sayle).

4. A.C.Stanhope-347.

5. " " " -353.

6. " " " -347.

7. " " " - "



Although there were many systems more or less in use at his time, he makes no mention of any other one in his letters, but he probably thought that almost any one of them, if applied correctly, and followed diligently and thoroughly, would give the desired result.

At the age of eight we find that his son is <sup>1</sup>through his Latin and Greek grammars and ready to review them, and Chesterfield takes it for granted that he can read Latin fluently enough to translate the passages from Cicero and Livy which he intersperses in his letters to him at this time.

He criticised the method of the schools in giving pupils only imitative exercises, in Latin composition. He would have them "exercises of invention"<sup>2</sup> by which the child would be stimulated to make use of his powers of observation upon what he learns, which habit he thinks would be of life-long benefit to him, if learned early.<sup>3</sup> The memory of a few Latin roots, if the pupil will make use of observation and careful comparison with other words, will, he says, enable him to know the meaning of most compound and derived words.<sup>3</sup>

He recommended the extensive use of the memory, and thought it advisable to learn long speeches and passages

1. Son-Sayle-2.

2. Son-Sayle-17.

3. Son-Sayle 5, . . .





from the best classical authors,<sup>1</sup> which, if memorized early, would be no great task, and which would always be retained as a source of perpetual pleasure. Yet he realized that no subject can be truly known, but by the use of reason, and this is what he tries to develop, above all things, in the education of his son. It is the critical knowledge of Greek and Latin which he desires that he shall have.<sup>2</sup> He continued his classical studies for about ten years, under a tutor who was "a perfect storehouse of Greek and Latin erudition."<sup>3</sup> The boy was over the "dry and difficult parts of learning"<sup>4</sup> long before the end of this time however, and was supposed to be able to read with ease, and to understand any of the great classics<sup>5</sup>; and Chesterfield, though perhaps with a fond father's partiality, thought he ought to know enough Greek to teach it in one of the Universities.<sup>6</sup>

Chesterfield desired that his son should early in life gain a taste for the classics, for he realized that whatever classical knowledge he was to gain must be obtained while young; when he was older he would have no time to turn over grammars, lexicons and commentaries.<sup>7</sup> After his son is thrown out into the great world, he neither requires

1. Godson II-K.P.-133,140.

2. Maty-Letters to Bishop of Waterford, II-470.

3. Maty-Letters to Friends, II-52.

4. Sayle-Son-112.

5. Son-Bradshaw-126.

6. Son-Sayle-56.

7. Godson-(Knickerbocker P.) II-249.





nor expects great application to books.<sup>1</sup> Other things are more necessary then. Early youth, then is the proper time to hoard up this "great stock of knowledge, which nobody can have too much of,"<sup>2</sup> and of which classical learning is an important constituent.

The classical books which are to be studied are all the standard, best established authors.<sup>3</sup> These consist, in Greek, of Homer, Xenophon, and especially Plato, Aristotle, Thucydides and Demosthenes, whom only adepts know,<sup>4</sup> and the knowledge of which would therefore distinguish him more in the learned world.

In Latin the best writers of the Augustan Age are to be read. Cicero, especially, is his "favorite author,"<sup>5</sup> the master whose bust he accords the best place in his library,<sup>6</sup> and to whose writings he most frequently and emphatically directs the attention of his pupil. "Of all authors, (he) is the author whom I would have you best acquainted with,"<sup>7</sup> he says, and as a sufficient reason for this opinion, he explains, "he writes both the best Latin and the best sense of any author. Besides, he will best qualify you to make a figure one day in Parliament."

1. Son-Sayle-52.

2. Ibid " -119.

3. Ibid " -154.

4. Son-Bradshaw-372.

5. Godson- (K.P.) I.-134.

6. Son-Sayle-82.

7. Godson- (K.P.)-183.



Cicero's De Oratore was the book above all others which Chesterfield desired that his son should master, as he was anxious that he should become a capable orator. "I hope you do not neglect to translate your Master Cicero," he writes, "for I look upon you as his apprentice, and by diligence you will in time be able to set up for yourself, and carry on his trade" and adds, with the partiality which one always holds for his favorite occupation, "it is the best trade in this country."<sup>1</sup>

Demosthenes and Quintilian are also to be carefully studied as masters of the art of speaking. The study is to be done in no haphazard manner, but carefully; "When you read any of your Latin orations, consider what was the object of the orator, and judge whether what he said was proper for his purpose and likely to persuade and prevail,"<sup>2</sup> and "study Demosthenes and Cicero --- to observe their choice of words, their harmony of diction, their method, their distribution of their exordia to engage the favor and attention of their audience, and their perorations, to endorce what they have said, and to leave a strong impression upon the passions."<sup>3</sup> This advice, if properly carried out, would train the reasoning ability of the pupil, just as the diligent study of the eloquent classical models also

1. Godson (K.P.)-II.-194.

2. " " II.-164.

3. Pratt's Life of Chesterfield, Ed.1774,II-195.





ought to form an elegant style: so that by a careful study of the classics, Chesterfield's orator, which he defines as "one who reasons justly and expresses himself elegantly upon all occasions,"<sup>1</sup> would be formed.

The other Latin writers of the best period, such as Virgil, Horace, Ovid and Livy, are to be studied also. Not all classical writers, even among those commonly studied in the schools were to be equally admired, however. Chesterfield shows himself to be an advance spirit of his age in the attitude which he assumes toward some of the classical writings which were at that time held in general admiration. Greek tragedy and epigrams especially, receive his disapproval. He advises a friend not to "take a fancy to the simplicity, or rather, insipidity of Greek tragedy, which, he says, we pretend to admire, that we may appear learned, but which we really find very tiresome!"<sup>2</sup> Concerning the Epigrams, he says to his son, "I hope you are got out of that worst company in the world, the Greek epigrams ---- I recommend (them) to your supreme contempt!"<sup>3</sup>

These statements, coming as they do from a man who had pretensions to learning, fore-shadow the general movement which was soon to sweep over all Europe, carrying with it many of the classical prejudices which had held

1. Son-Sayle-137.

2. Maty, II-To Friends-244.

3. Son-Sayle-17.



her in bondage for so many years.

The great Homer even, is far from perfect in his impartial eyes. He admires his beauties, indeed, but nevertheless thinks he is sometimes dull, and "when he slumbers, I sleep."<sup>1</sup> His hero, Achilles, is, he thought, an improper hero of an epic poem.<sup>2</sup>

Virgil, on the contrary, he says, "is all sense; and therefore I like him better than his model; but he is often languid, especially in the last five or six books, where I am obliged to take a good deal of snuff." <sup>1</sup>

These opinions he tells freely to his son, but advises him to keep them secret, "for if it should be known, I should be abused by every tasteless pedant ---- in England." <sup>1</sup> Lucian and Horace are surpassed by our own Swift and Pope.<sup>3</sup> Terence is somewhat "deficient in comic humor",<sup>4</sup> and Plautus and other obscure authors are not worth studying at all, as they will only teach one bad Latin.<sup>5</sup>

The best writers only are to be read, and those of the Augustan Age only: for those excessively learned persons, who have studied the good and bad Latin alike,

1. Son-Bradshaw-558.

2. " " -193.

3. Maty, II.-To Friends-232.

4. Maty, II.- " " -263.

5. Son-Bradshaw-150.



unconsciously borrow from both, in their own use of it, consequently they use worse Latin than if they had never read anything but the best Augustan masters. For nobody but a pedant Chesterfield thinks, ever reads those authors of other periods, most of whom write obsolete and unusual Latin; and pedantry in all forms is a fault to be carefully guarded against.

He ridicules this kind of pedantry when he expresses his contempt for the one who "pores over --- obscure authors, treasures up the obsolete words which he meets with there, and uses them upon all occasions, to show his reading at the expense of his judgment!" He, together with those who, for the purpose of displaying their erudition, borrow the obsolete and barbarous Latin words from the Supplementary Appendix to the classical dictionaries,<sup>1</sup> alike are held in very low esteem by Chesterfield.

Fearing lest his son might acquire pedantic tastes, he warns him against the disease of "Bibliomania" which he says, "always smells of pedantry, and not always of learning",<sup>2</sup> since the best books, and the ones most worthy of study, are always the most common, and easily accessible,<sup>2</sup> and the best established books are always the ones most worthy of study.<sup>3</sup>

1. Maty, I.-The World-173.

2. Letters, Sentences & Maxims-Edition DeLuxe  
(For Chesterfield Society)-296.

3. Son-Sayle-154.





In the same spirit, and impelled by the same belief, he advises his son, when at Rome, to study it classically, not "knick-knackically",<sup>1</sup> since the best things there are also the best known. Demosthenes also, and Cicero, and all the recognized masters, are to be studied, "not to discover an old Athenian or Roman custom, nor to puzzle yourself with the value of talents, mines, drachms, and sesterces, like the learned blockheads do",<sup>2</sup> but to observe their power and resources as orators.

His satire upon even those idolaters of the Augustan Age, whose whole lives and thoughts were bound up in the consideration of the ancients, is frequent and outspoken. One of the most common of the forms of those "errors and abuses, which too often attend the study of the classics"<sup>3</sup> is that practiced by pedants who, to show their learning, "adorn their conversation --- by happy quotations of Greek and Latin". Many of these have "contracted such a familiarity with the Greek and Roman authors, that they call them by certain names or epithets denoting intimacy, as old Homer, that sly rogue Horace; Maro, instead of Virgil, and Naso instead of Ovid."<sup>4</sup>

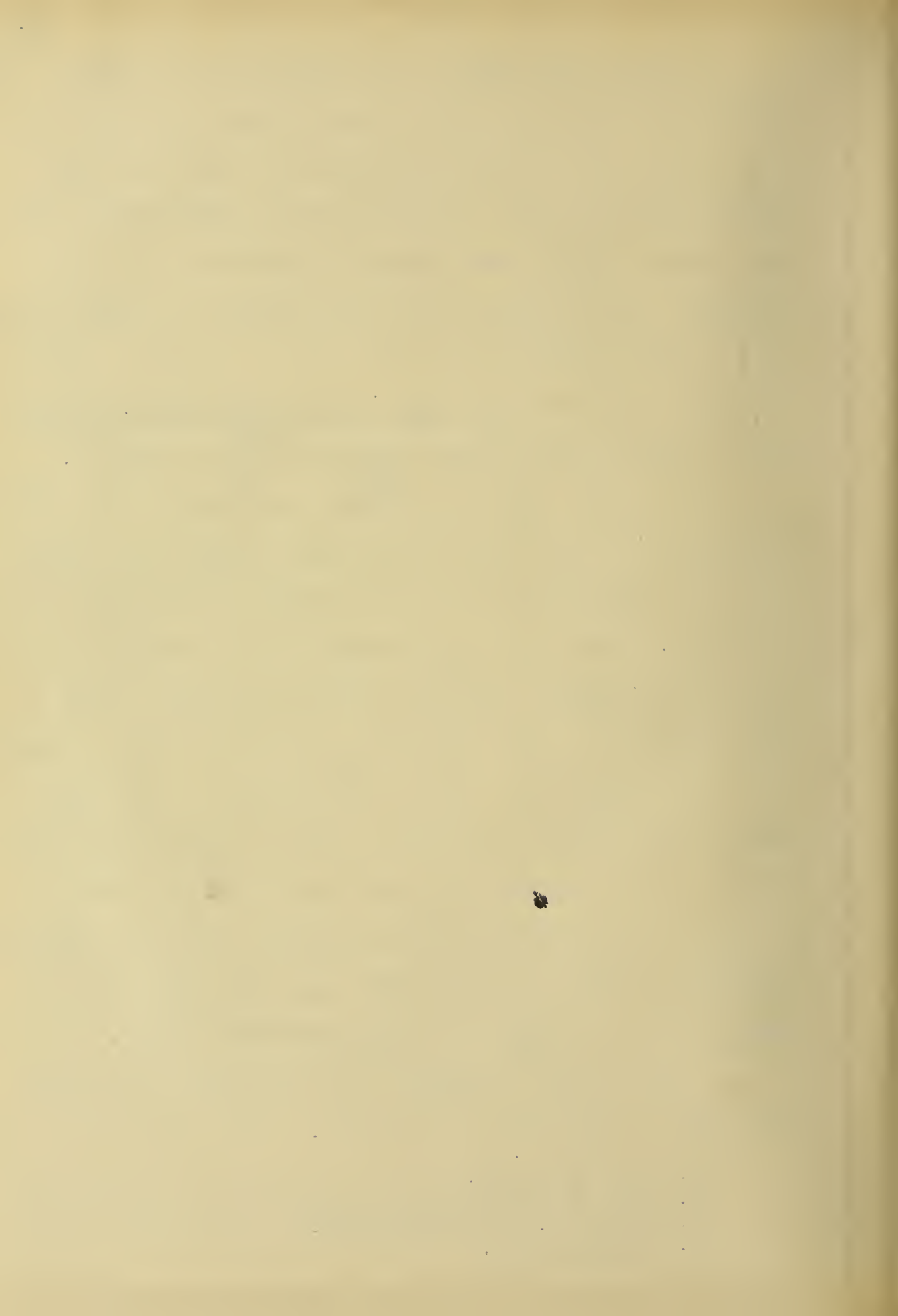
Chesterfield confesses that he himself practiced this mode of expression when young. "At nineteen", he says,

1. Son-Sayle-129.

2. Life of Lord Chesterfield-Pratt, London 1774-II-195.

3. Maty, II.-To Friends-552.

4. Son-65-Sayle.



"I left the University of Cambridge, where I was an absolute pedant. When I talked my best, I quoted Horace; when I aimed at being facetious, I quoted Martial; and when I had a mind to be a fine gentleman, I talked Ovid. I was convinced that none but the ancients had common sense; that the classics contained everything that was either necessary, useful, or ornamental to men, and I was not without thoughts of wearing the "toga virilis" of the Romans, instead of the vulgar and illiberal dress of the moderns."<sup>1</sup> But he was not long in finding that he was totally mistaken in almost every notion he had entertained,<sup>2</sup> and his advice to his son on this subject is full of interest to us, because of its practicability and common sense. "If you would avoid the accusation of pedantry on one hand, or the suspicion of ignorance on the other, abstain from learned ostentation. Speak the language of the company you are in; speak it purely, and unlarded with any other. Never seem wiser, nor more learned, than the people you are with."<sup>2</sup>

Another type of pedants whom he attacks with vigor is that of those extensive readers, who load their memories, without exercising their judgments; and make lumber rooms of their heads."<sup>3</sup> These are likely to inflict their learning upon you at any time, "more desirous if possible, to show you your own ignorance than their own learning,"<sup>4</sup> "and

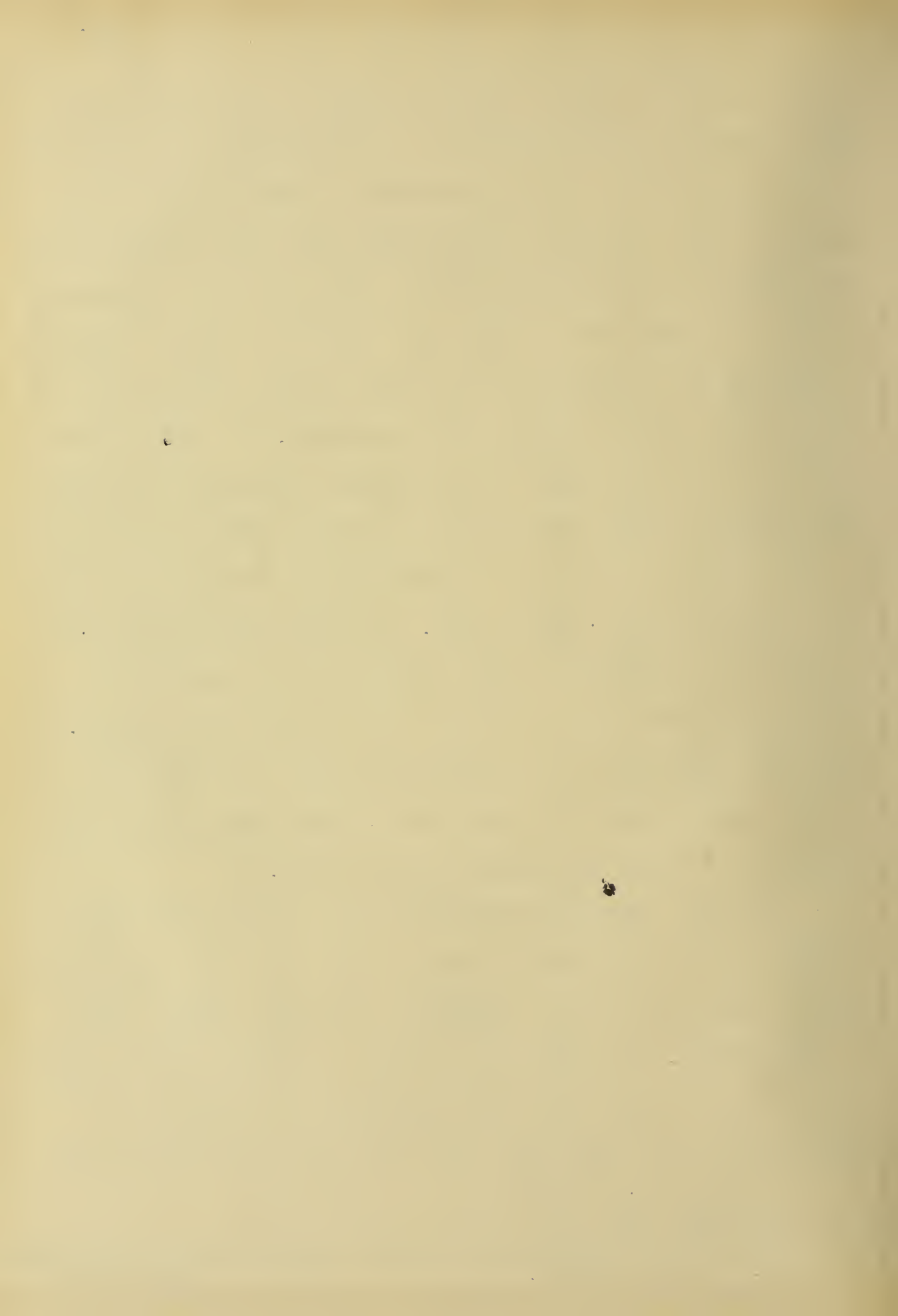
1. Son, 215, Sayle.

2. Son, 65, "

3. Letters, Sentences & Maxims-Chesterfield Society, 278.

4. Son, 64, Sayle.

(Ed. DeLuxe)





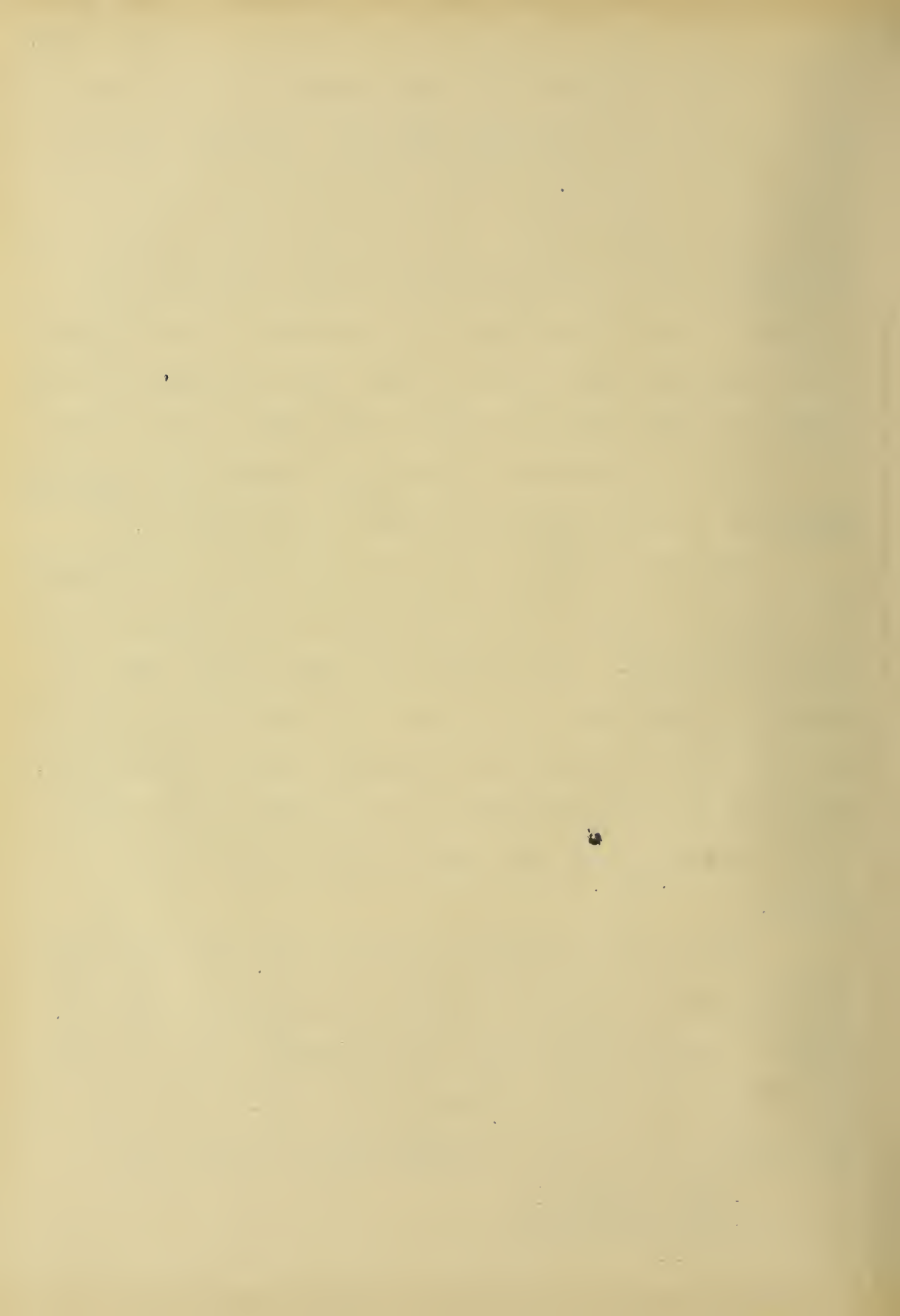
they most absurdly draw all their maxims, both for public and private life, from what they call Parallel cases in the ancient authors".<sup>1</sup> Chesterfield does not spare his satire upon these people. "I have known these absurdities carried so far, by people of injudicious learning," he exclaims, "that I should not be surprised if some of them were to propose while we are at war with the Gauls, that a number of geese should be kept in the Tower, upon account of the infinite advantage which Rome received in a parallel case, from a certain number of geese in the Capitol."<sup>1</sup>

His mature judgment upon this practice of reasoning from parallel cases from the ancients is set forth in this excellent advice. "Reason upon the case itself, and the several circumstances that attend it, and act accordingly; but not from the authority of ancient Poets or Historians. Take into your consideration, if you please, cases seemingly analogous; but take them as helps only, not as guides." <sup>1</sup>

Indeed, if a gentleman would be entirely free from the suspicion of pedantry, he should be able to take, lay aside or change his learning, occasionally, "with as much ease as he would take or lay aside his hat."<sup>2</sup> The true use of learning, after all, is subjective; it is for the

1. Son-64-Sayle.

2. Son-260-Sayle.



scholar's own benefit and enjoyment primarily, and should be displayed to others only incidentally. "Wear your learning like your watch, in a private pocket; and do not pull it out and strike it, merely to show that you have one. If you are asked what o'clock it is, tell it, but do not proclaim it hourly and unasked, like the watchman."<sup>1</sup>

Chesterfield plainly saw the defects in the education of children in his day. He admits that a "learned parson rusting in his cell at Oxford or Cambridge" may reason well upon the nature of man, yet in reality he knows nothing of him, for he has never lived with him.<sup>2</sup> This mingling with men, and the study of the "book of the world,"<sup>3</sup> should hold, he thought, a much more important place in an educational scheme than the mere pursuit of any one branch of knowledge. He thinks that educators might with profit follow, in their methods of training, the example of the ancients, whom they so zealously study, for the "Ancients began the education of their children by forming their hearts and manners. They taught them the duty of men and citizens; we teach them the language of the Ancients, and leave their morals and manners to shift for themselves."<sup>4</sup> This is the "fundamental error"<sup>4</sup> of the educational systems

1. Son, 65, Sayle.

2. Son, 237, Sayle.

3. Son, 246, Sayle.

4. The World-Waty I.-140



of his time, and it is a grave one.

Chesterfield's attitude toward the Ancients, though respectful, showed, however, little of the servile worship and imitation which was so common at his time. Personally, he believed that the Modern Age is fully as good as the old Augustan one. The reason which he sees for the prevalent feeling of the contrary -- the theory of literary retrogression, or, as he expresses it, of "this progressive state of deterioration"<sup>1</sup> is set forth by him in an Essay in the World. "Authors", he says, "especially poets, though great men, are alas! but men; and like other men, subject to the weaknesses of human nature, though perhaps in a less degree: but it is however, certain that their breasts are not absolutely strangers to the passions of jealousy, pride and envy. Hence it is that they are very apt to measure merit by the century, to love dead authors better than living ones, and to love them the better, the longer they have been dead. The Augustan Age is therefore their favorite era, being at least seventeen hundred years distant from the present----Those were times indeed for genius to display itself. It was honored, tasted and rewarded. But now -- O tempora! O mores!"<sup>2</sup>

This worship of the Ancients was, as he knew, cultivated in the schools, where people hear little else,

1. Maty I.-World-No. 197. Oct. 7, 1756.

2. World-Oct. 7, 1756-Maty I.





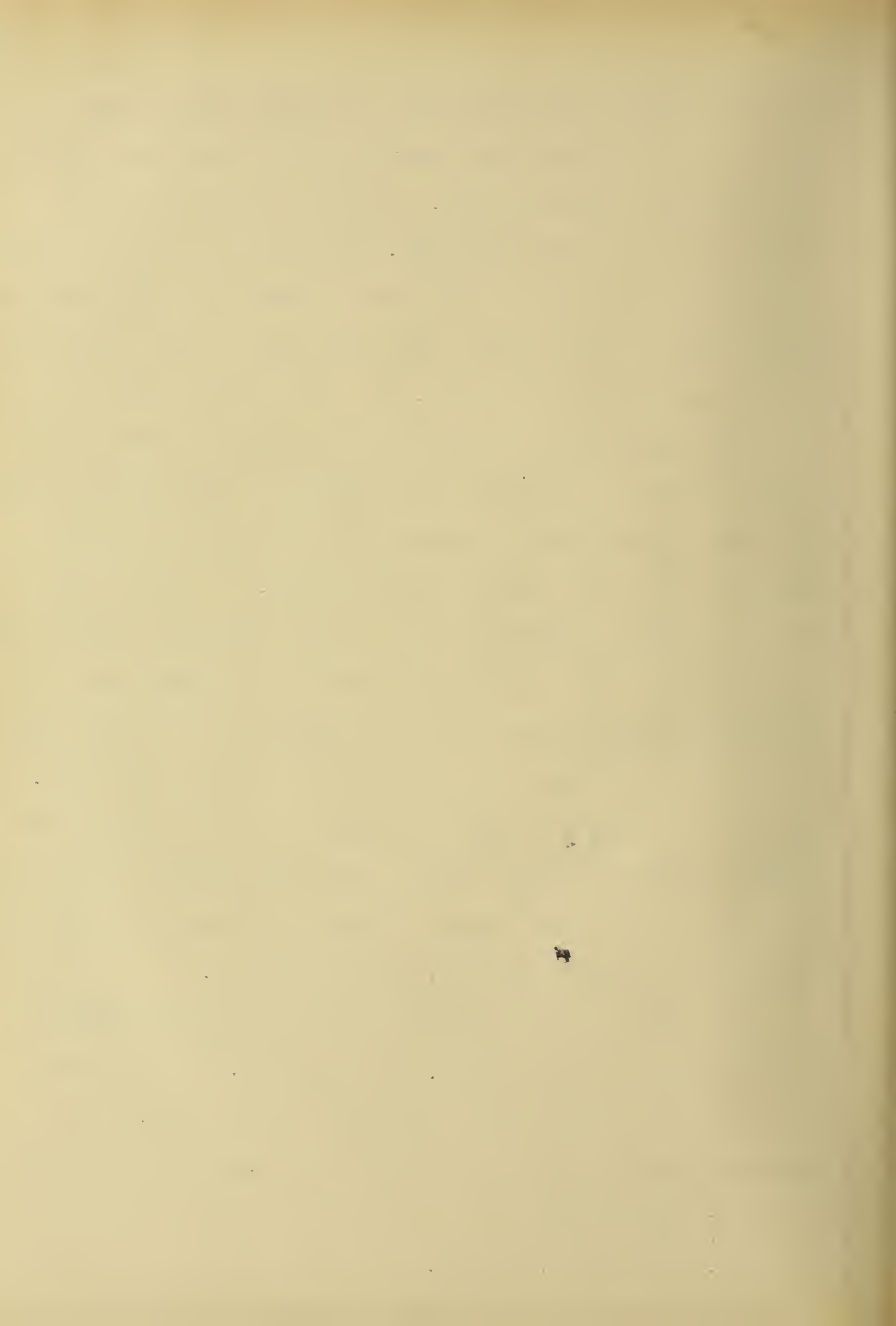
and after leaving, to show their learning, "are always talking of the Ancients as something more than men, and of the moderns<sup>m</sup> as something less. They are never without a classic or two in their pockets; they stick to the good old sense; they read none of the modern trash; and will show you plainly that no improvement has been made in any one art or science these last 1700 years." <sup>1</sup> From these ideas -- "our early prejudices in favor of antiquity",--there is no escape, so long as children are taught by people who in turn have been prejudiced by education to deify the ancients' madmen just as they deified their heroes.<sup>2</sup> However his advice to his son concerning his proper attitude towards them represents his true feeling: "I would by no means have you disown your acquaintance with the ancients, but still less would I have you brag of an exclusive intimacy with them. Speak of the Moderns without contempt, and of the Ancients without idolatry; judge them all by their merits, but not by their ages; and if you happen to have an Elzevir classic in your pocket, neither show it, nor mention it."<sup>2</sup>

He does not look upon the "Modern as mere pigmies when compared to those giants of antiquity."<sup>3</sup> "I am not sour nor silly enough yet," he says, "to be a snarling laudator temporis acti, and to hate or despise the present

1. Son, 64-Sayle.

2. " " "

3. World-Sept. 19-1754.



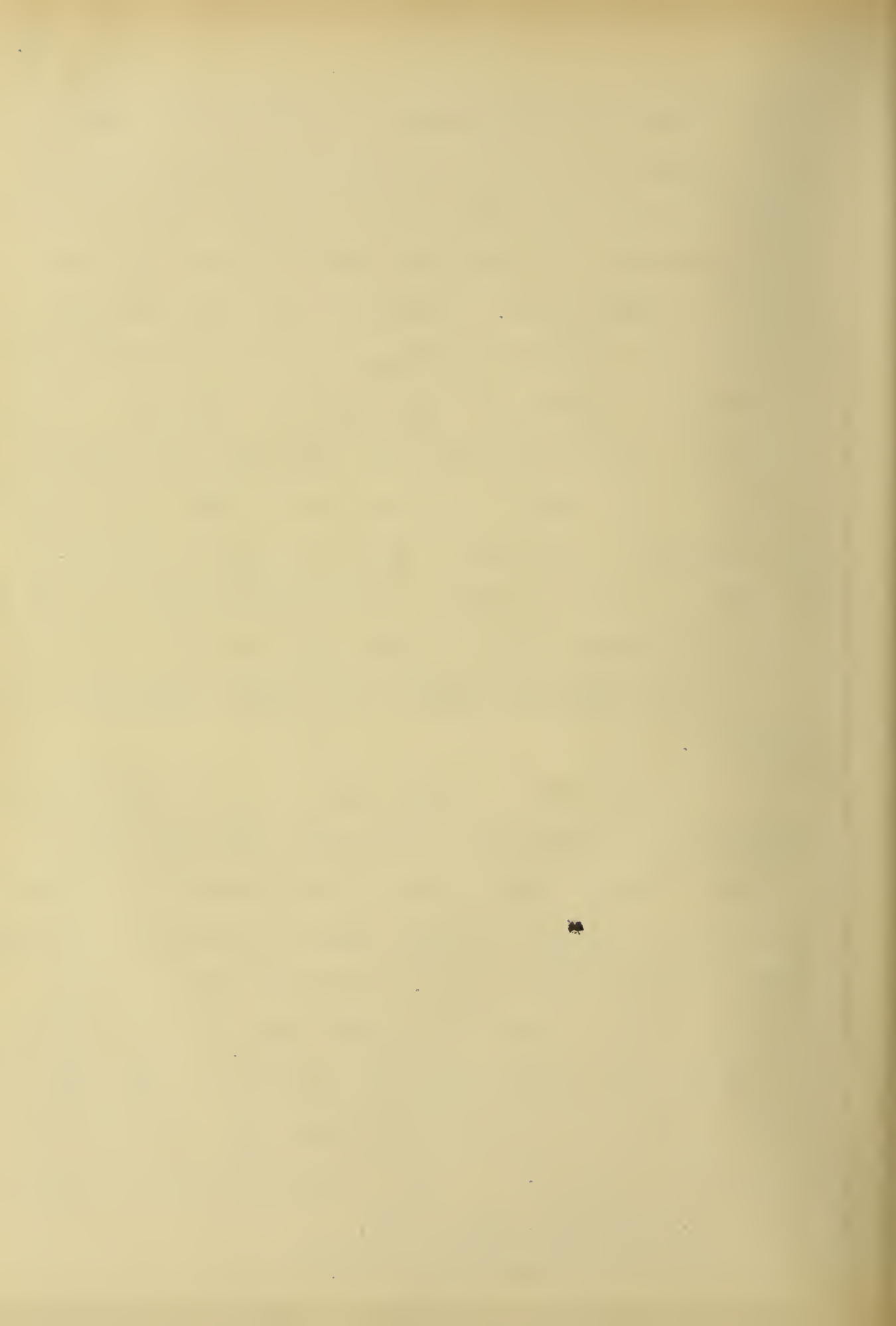
age because it is the present. I cannot, like many of my contemporaries, rail at the wonderful degeneracy and corruption of these times nor by sneering compliments to the ingenious, the sagacious moderns intimate that they have not common sense. I really do not think that the present age is marked by any new and distinguished vices and follies, unknown to former ages",<sup>1</sup> and again, "I am not of the opinion of those who think that our ancestors were --- wiser than we, and who reject every new invention as chimerical, and brand it with the name of project."<sup>2</sup> In short, he was a believer in the possibilities of his own age, and thought that the proper cultivation of it should not be neglected because of a foolish veneration for the past.

"I shall not at present enter into the great question between the Ancients and the Moderns, much less shall I presume to decide upon a point of that importance, which has been the subject of debate among the learned from the days of Horace down to ours. To make my court to the learned, I will lament the gradual decay of human nature, for these last sixteen centuries, but at the same time, I will do justice to my contemporaries, and give them their due share of praise."<sup>3</sup> Thus although he does not wish to

1. World-Sat.-Dec.7-1753.

2. Fog's Journal-Jan.17,1736.

3. The World-June 14, 1753.

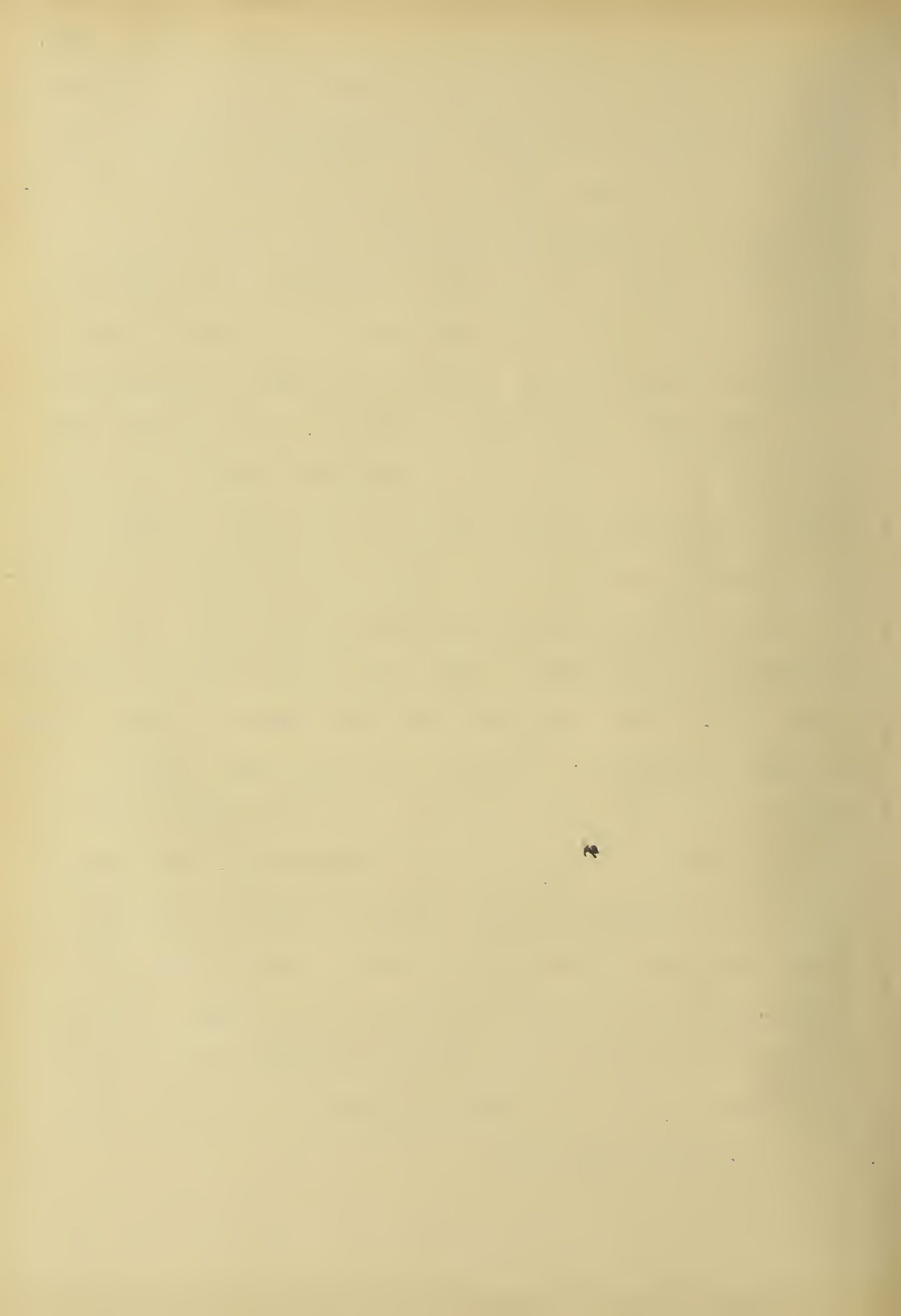




appear on either side of this literary struggle, in open hostility against the other, he undeviatingly champions the side of the Moderns, who at that time were in the minority. His views are stated more concisely, and very definitely in a letter to his son in which he expresses his opinion that the age of Louis XIV equalled in all respects, and greatly exceeded in many things, the great Augustan Age.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever his personal feelings on the subject may have been in later life, he acknowledges readily that he also, in his youth, was a victim of this same idolatry for the classics, which in later years, he reproaches in others. "My first prejudice was my classical enthusiasm, which I received from the books I read, and the masters who explained them to me. I was convinced there had been no common sense or common honesty in the world for these last fifteen hundred years, but that they were totally extinguished with the ancient Greek and Roman Governments. Homer and Virgil could have no faults, because they were ancient, Milton and Tasso could have no merit, because they were modern. And I could almost have said with regard to the Ancients what Cicero very absurdly and unbecomingly for a philosopher, says with regard to Plato, 'cum quam errare

1. Son, Sayle, 234.



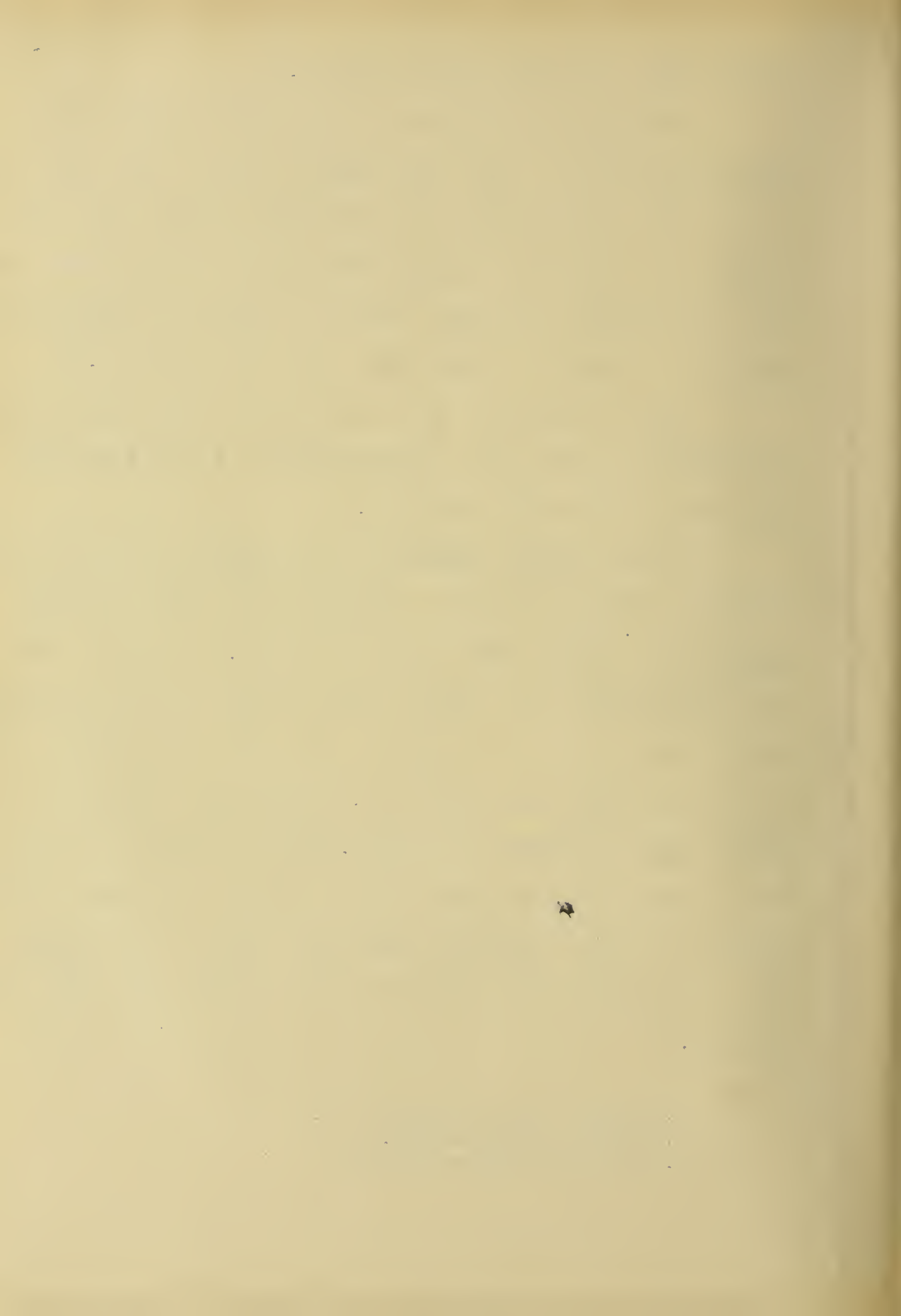
malim, quam cum aliis recte sentire."<sup>1</sup>

Although in his later life he did not hold this exalted opinion of them, nor regard them as demi-gods, he, to the end of his life, had a profound respect for their wisdom, and "when at a loss, searched as every modern should do, the Ancients, in order to say in English, whatever they had said in Latin or Greek upon the like occasion."<sup>2</sup>

Thus he does not hold the view of those who praise the Moderns to the total disparagement of the Ancients, any more than he does the contrary.

He was simply opposed to the pedantic idea that the classics, because written centuries ago, were for that reason more worthy than modern writings. He had by this time discovered that "nature was the same three thousand years ago, as it is at present, that men were but men then as well as now; that modes and customs vary often, but that human nature is always the same, and " he says, "I can no more suppose that men were better, braver or wiser, fifteen hundred or three thousand years ago, than I can suppose that the animals and vegetables were better then than they are now."<sup>3</sup>

1. Pratt's Chesterfield -2.
2. World, Woty-I.-200.
3. Pratt's Chesterfield-3.



He merely wished to remove the classics from their pedestal which they had occupied for so long a time, and put them on the same plane with the moderns. He wished that it might become possible that people should "judge them all by their merits, but not by their ages."<sup>1</sup>

1. Son-Sayle-64.





M O D E R N   L A N G U A G E S.

Modern knowledge however, he considered as much more important than ancient, although he wished his son to know both well.<sup>1</sup> He lamented the fact that in the schools, the study of the classics was taking up so much of the time which could, with better profit be employed upon modern subjects, which would do more practical good: and he proposed to give his son "a proper share of classical learning" but "a great one of more useful modern knowledge."<sup>2</sup>

The modern languages are of use in the development of the "omnis homo", in order to give him a cosmopolitan spirit, to make of him a "man of all countries."<sup>3</sup> This can be attained only with a thorough knowledge of the languages, so that he may be enabled to converse and read fluently in them. They are an ornament and culture to any gentleman, and in certain circumstances, especially in travel, are very useful. "It is great pleasure, as well as a great advantage", says Chesterfield, "to be able to speak to people of all nations, and well, in their own language,"<sup>4</sup> and "the more --- a gentleman knows the better, for though they are not all equally necessary, they are all ornamental,

1. Son-Sayle-66.

2. A.C.Stanhope-(Oxford '90)-323.

3. Godson - II. -163.

4. Son-Bradshaw-347.



and occasionally useful."<sup>1</sup>

One of the pleasures of the language student, aside from conversation with people of foreign lands, is his ability to read in the original, standard works of other countries. It is not necessary for him to trust translation. He can go to the source. "The great advantage of being acquainted with many languages, consists in understanding the sense of those nations and authors who speak and write those languages."<sup>2</sup>

Aside from the general culture which they would give a gentleman, the European languages were highly important for the boy who was being educated for a future diplomat. It would often be necessary for him in such a position to carry on negotiations in a foreign language, and for this, an exact knowledge of language would be absolutely necessary. "You cannot conceive what an advantage it will give you in negotiations," he writes, "to possess Italian, German and French, perfectly, so as to understand all the force and "finesse" of these three languages. If two men of equal talents negotiate together, he who best understands the language in which the negotiation is carried on, will infallibly get the better of the other. The signification and force of one single word is often of great consequence

1. Godson, II-174.

2. New Plan of Education-London-1777-p 55.





in a treaty, and even in a letter."<sup>1</sup> Therefore he should know it perfectly and be able to speak it purely and correctly as the natives of the --- countries, or not appear to advantage in conversation, nor treat with others in it upon equal terms."<sup>2</sup> In mere conversation, "people are as unwilling to speak in a language which they do not possess thoroughly, as others are to hear them. Your thoughts are cramped and appear to great disadvantage in any language of which you are not the perfect master."<sup>3</sup> For this reason one should know the languages well if they are to furnish him any pleasure or profit; indeed, "knowing any language imperfectly, is very little better than not knowing it at all",<sup>4</sup> Chesterfield thinks.

This perfection in the languages is to be acquired only by diligent application. They should be learned as early in life as possible, in mere childhood preferably,<sup>5</sup> and should be kept in practice by frequent use. He advises his son to converse in a foreign language whenever possible, and when reading for amusement, to "let every language you are master of have its turn, so that you may not only retain, but improve in every one."<sup>6</sup>

1. Son-Bradshaw-341.

2. " " -112.

3. " " - 77.

4. Chesterfield himself learned French in infancy, from a Norman nurse; and he favored the plan of teaching a child three languages at once while learning to talk-as English from his parents, French from a nurse, and German from the footman who attends him. See Letter to Bayrolles-Watly II, 386.

5. Son-Bradshaw-372.

6. Wilson, II-124.



The most essential foreign language is French. It should be made a very part of one's self, for it is "as necessary for you as English, and you should speak and write them both with equal purity. --- English is only the language of England, but French, --- is the language of all Europe,"<sup>1</sup> the universal language."<sup>2</sup> A gentleman should speak it, not only correctly, but even elegantly<sup>3</sup>, and know all its "finesses."<sup>3</sup> It is of especial use in negotiation because "all the affairs of the several powers in Europe are transacted in French, and --- you would negotiate to great disadvantage, if you did not know with precision, the import and strength of all French words<sup>1</sup>!" In travel it is equally important for as it is used more or less in every country in Europe, "en la possédant parfaitement vous serez pour ainsi dire, de tous les pays"<sup>4</sup> he says. Moreover, French was the polite language<sup>5</sup> of the English gentlemen of the time, and for that reason alone it would not be permitted "a' un honnête homme d'en ignora la délicatesse et les finesses."<sup>6</sup> The intimate connections between the aristocracy of the two countries made the French language almost a daily necessity in the homes of English lords. To Chesterfield, especially,

1. Godson, II -174.

2. " II -142.

3. " II -258.

4. " II -136.

5. " II -175.

6. " II -253.



who admired the French, and was even desirous of being taken for a Frenchman himself, it was considered absolutely necessary in the education of every gentleman.

One of the chief pleasures to be deprived from the knowledge of the French language, is to be found in the fact that it opens to the student a vast store of rich literature. In fact, Chesterfield thought that the richest of all literatures "was the French of the Golden Age of Louis XIV." This period he says, "equalled in all, and greatly exceeded in many things, the Augustan."<sup>1</sup>

In Drama, especially, is the French literature rich. Here it is that it excels all other literatures. "It must be confessed that in all respects the French theatre outdoes all others, not excepting that of the Ancients, with all the respect that is due to them"<sup>2</sup> he says and even adds, "There is not, nor ever was any theatre comparable to the French."<sup>3</sup>

The tragedies of Corneille and Racine, and the comedies of Moliere, are of course, the paragons of excellence to which he refers. He holds their plays as "admirable lessons, both for the heart and head."<sup>4</sup> Corneille is the most grand and sublime,<sup>5</sup> Racine the most tender and touching,<sup>6</sup> and Moliere's comedies are well worth all the other comedies

1. Son-Sayle -334.

2. Maty, II-93.

3. Son-Bradshaw-372.

4. Ibid. 372.

5. Godson, II - 175.

6. " II - 130





of the world.<sup>1</sup> They depict only the "natural and the true",<sup>2</sup> and therefore will live forever.

Marivaux also, he considered good, and thought that underneath the light, sentimental style which has given rise to the term "Marivaudage", the author showed a true knowledge of the human heart.

Chesterfield had the true French classical taste in drama. He objected to the popular English drama, because of the disregard for the unities, and the murder on the stage.<sup>3</sup> He was also opposed to the new romantic "Comedie Larmoyante" or tragi-comedy. "I do not like those tragical and weeping comedies;" he says, "I would have things be what they are; I love to laugh and to cry in form".<sup>4</sup> This last sentence seems to strike the key-note to the classical objection to all romantic innovations.

The "drame bourgeois", however, he admits ought to be permitted, both according to the rules of Horace, and because of its fidelity to real life. He thinks that "Interest and sentiment and affecting situations are not restrained to kings and heroes; they are to be met with in common life",<sup>5</sup> and therefore it is perfectly proper that they should be introduced into the drama.

1. Godson II-130.

2. Son-Bradshaw-384.

3. " " 501.

4. Maty- II-248.

5. " II-248.



Chesterfield's attitude toward the French

"Romans" is the strictly classical one: for the most part they are worthless. "Many people lose a great deal of time", he says "by reading -- frivolous and idle books, such as the absurd romances of the last two centuries, where characters that never existed are insipidly displayed, and sentiments that were never felt pompously described; or the new flimsy brochures that now swarm in France, of Fairy Tales, "Reflexions sur le Coeur, et l'Esprit," "l'etaphysique de l'Amour", "Analysis de Beaux Sentiments", and such sort of idle frivolous stuff, that nourishes and improves the mind, just as much as whipped cream would the body."<sup>1</sup>

His advice for the most part is "Stick to the best established books in every language; the celebrated poets, historians, orators or philosophers";<sup>1</sup> these foolish books are not worth reading except for the fact that other people read them, and therefore it is necessary for an educated person to know something about them. It is for this reason that he advises his son to read one chapter of Cleopatre, and one of Clelie, "without which it would be impossible to form any idea of their extravagances"; but he adds "God keep you from going to the twelfth chapter".<sup>2</sup> It is for this reason also that he thinks a child ought to be told something about fairies, ghosts, giants and witches; "to convince him

1. Son-Tradshaw-317.

2. " " 383.





of the absurdity and extravagance of these idle, non-sensical tales."<sup>1</sup> Aside from this, his advice concerning these "romans" is to "let blockheads read what blockheads write",<sup>2</sup> and he warns his son that although he may taste "this new cookery from time to time", yet not to let it corrupt his taste for the good old cookery of the master chefs of the times of Louis XIV.<sup>3</sup> Of all the romances then in existence Mme. de LaFayette's "Princesse de Cleves" is the only one which receives Chesterfield's praise. It is a "roman d'analysis" rather than a "roman d'aventure", however, and is more classical in spirit and in treatment than the others. "Le language en est pur et elegant," he says "et les sentimens delicats, sans les sottises ordinaires dans les Romans de Geans et d'enchanteurs!"<sup>4</sup>

The French writers whom Chesterfield admired most, aside from the great dramatists, are Voltaire, Montesquieu, LaRoche foucauld, and La Pruyère. Voltaire is the greatest of these. "I am not ashamed to say that I admire and delight in (Voltaire), as an author, equally in prose and in verse,"<sup>5</sup> he says. He is a "brilliant writer",<sup>6</sup> and "everything in his works delights me, barring his impiety, with which he cannot forbear larding everything he writes".<sup>7</sup> This, he thought, even if felt, should be concealed?

1. A. C. Stanhope, 345.

2. Son-Bradshaw-363.

3. Ibid. 382.

4. Godson, II -260.

5. Son-Sayle-235.

6. Ibid. 237.

7. Maty, II-240.



Voltaire's "Histoire Universelle" is "an history wrote by a man of sense, for the use of other men of sense." "He passes over all minute and trifling details and only dwells upon important events, such as the great Revolution of Empires, the manners of the times, and the progressions of human reason, arts and sciences"<sup>1</sup>. "I read it for the fourth time," Chesterfield writes, "and I shall read it still again, it amuses me so much."<sup>2</sup> He is equally enthusiastic in his admiration for his "Histoire de Siecle de Louis XIV." "I dote on it", he says, "I cannot see the blemishes through the beauties that enchant me --"<sup>3</sup> We find throughout the book all that a man of sense who is well informed would wish to say, and all that a man of sense would wish to learn, concerning a period which will ever be famous. I admire his moderation."<sup>3</sup> "He tells me all I want to know, and nothing more. His reflections are short, just and produce others in his readers. (He is) free from religious, philosophical, political, and national prejudices, beyong any historian I ever met with, (and) he related all those matters --- truly and impartially."<sup>4</sup> Voltaire's "Henriade" also is greatly admired by Chesterfield. "I will declare", he says, "though possibly to my shame, that I never read any epic poem with near so much pleasure."<sup>5</sup>

1. Godson-II-201.

2. Ibid, II-67.

3. Maty- II-280.

4. Son-Sayle-234.

5. Son-Bradshaw-II-558.



The respect in which Chesterfield held Voltaire's works is probably due partially to his great personal regard for the man. The two were friends, and Chesterfield pays Voltaire this tribute: "He is the most entertaining and the most instructive company that I know."<sup>1</sup> The same thing might be said concerning his regard for Montesquieu; they also were friends, and Chesterfield advised his son while in France to draw from that source all he was able,<sup>2</sup> since Montesquieu was in every sense his most useful acquaintance, because of his "parts -- great reading, and knowledge of the world."<sup>3</sup>

LaBruyere and LaRoche foucauld are of value, because of the insight into character<sup>3</sup> and human nature<sup>4</sup> which they give, and which it is necessary that a young man who is to live in the world, should know.

The study of German, while not important intrinsically, is nevertheless necessary for one who is destined for the political world, at a time when a Hanoverian prince was on the English throne, and when a great number of the ministerial positions were to the German courts. "German will, I fear, be always a useful language, for an Englishman to know."<sup>5</sup> Its usefulness was enhanced in Chesterfield's mind

1. Godson II-58.

2. Son-Bralshaw-403.

3. " " -441.

4. " " -403.

5. Naty-II.-336.





by the fact that it was not generally known at that time in England. "It will be of great use to you when you come into business, and the more so, as you will be almost the only Englishman who either can speak or understand it,"<sup>1</sup> he says, and again, "German is important for you. Your speaking and writing that well will particularly distinguish you from every other man in England, and is, moreover, of great use to any one who is, as probably you will be, employed by the empire."<sup>2</sup>

As to the language itself, it is "difficult"<sup>3</sup> and rarely occurs. It is much harder than any of the other languages, and can be learned only by constant practice and application. He had his son learn it by travelling in the German cities, and attending German lectures in Leipsig; and kept up his practice in conversation in it, after he had left that country, by employing a Saxon footman, who could speak nothing else.<sup>4</sup>

Of the field of German literature which a study of the language would reveal to him, Chesterfield knew nothing. He could speak of no standard books in that language to recommend to his son for study; and it is characteristic of the uninquiring pseudo-classical mind of the age that he did not care to take the necessary trouble to find out any

1. Son,-Bradshaw-341.

2. Ibid. 396.

3. Ibid. 181.

4. Sayle-Son-57.



particulars about the literature of this Teutonic people. He speaks of classical works in all other languages, but "whether you have any such in German, I am not quite sure, nor, indeed, am I inquisitive."<sup>1</sup>

As he himself says, he is "not over-fond" of the Germans,<sup>2</sup> and his personal opinion, prejudiced as it is by the thought of the century, is that the "Germans -- are below-true wit, sound taste, and good sense",<sup>3</sup> and therefore not worthy of much study.

Italian, like every other language, is an ornament to the possessor<sup>4</sup>, and an addition in the line of culture. It is also useful in travel in Italy, and possibly in future political negotiations.

This language is very easy; especially for one who has a foundation of Latin. "Whoever understands French and Latin as well as you do, understands at least half of the Italian language", Chesterfield says, "And has very little occasion for a dictionary."<sup>5</sup> With this foundation all that is necessary is "the idioms, phrases and delicacies", which are soon learned by conversation.<sup>5</sup>

Italian literature is well worth knowing, "there being many very polite and good authors in that language."<sup>6</sup>

A few of the best however, are enough to read.<sup>6</sup> Of the

1. Son-Bradshaw-500.

2. Maty- II - 118.

3. Son-Sayle-161.

4. Son-Bradshaw-262.

5. Ibid, -261.

6. Ibid.-326.





Italian writers, Chesterfield places Ariosto first. "If fancy, imagination, invention, description, etc. constitute a Poet, Ariosto is undoubtedly a great one,"<sup>1</sup> he thinks. Indeed he classes him with Homer. "I am by no means sure that Homer had superior invention or excelled more in description than Ariosto. It is worth your attention not only as an ingenious poem, but as the source of all modern tales, novels, fables and romances, as Ovid's *Metamorphosis* was of the ancient ones."<sup>2</sup>

Tasso is the only other poet who deserves attention.<sup>3</sup> His "*Gerusalemme*", and Boccaccio's "*Decameron*" are all the works of invention, aside from Ariosto, that are worth reading in that language,<sup>1</sup> says Chesterfield. "They undoubtedly have great merit."<sup>4</sup>

Concerning Dante, Chesterfield expresses his opinion definitely. "Though I formerly knew Italian extremely well," he says, "I could never understand him; for which reason I had done with him, fully convinced that he was not worth the pains necessary to understand him",<sup>5</sup> and as sufficient reason for this conclusion he says. "In every language, the easiest books are usually the best", because an author who is obscure and difficult, certainly does not think clearly himself.<sup>3</sup>

1. Son, Sayle, 159.
2. Son, Bradshaw-500.
3. Son-Sayle-153.
4. Son, Bradshaw, 219.
5. Ibid.-320.



Petrarch he does not admire either, but calls him a "sing-song, love sick poet."<sup>1</sup> Machiavello as a political writer, and certain Italian historians and translators of the classics are also worth while.<sup>1</sup>

Italian Literature, as a whole is too fanciful, he thinks. "The Italians are a great deal too much above -- true wit, sound taste, and good sense"<sup>2</sup> and he warns his son, and puts him on his guard against the conceits found there. "Don't let your fancy be dazzled and your taste corrupted by the 'conceitti', the quaintnesses, and false thoughts, which are too much the characteristics of the Italian and Spanish authors". They are books which are to be tasted lightly if at all.

As for Spanish, Chesterfield seems to have intended that his son should study it,<sup>3</sup> but it does not appear that he ever did so. However he says "you can understand it without learning it (from your knowledge of Latin, French, and Italian), and that is sufficient, for outside of Spain it is never spoken."<sup>4</sup>

The study of English, Chesterfield thought, deserved much more attention than was usually given to it. This necessary subject of learning was too much neglected, he thought, for ancient classical learning, which could never at this time

1. Son-Sayle-152.
2. Son-Sayle-161.
3. Son-Bradshaw-112.
4. Godson-II-269.



be learned correctly.<sup>1</sup> English is the most necessary study for an Englishman: "It is very useful and becoming to a gentleman to speak several languages well (but) it is most absolutely necessary for him to speak his own native language correctly and elegantly, not to be laughed at in every company."<sup>2</sup> "Treason against grammar is pardonable in a foreign language, but not in one's own."<sup>3</sup> "A man will be forgiven even great errors in a foreign language, but in his own even the least slips are justly laid hold of and ridiculed."<sup>4</sup>

For that reason it is necessary to be careful in the use of English, but "it is by no means sufficient to be free from faults in speaking and writing: you must do both correctly and elegantly."<sup>4</sup> The purity and elegance of the English language<sup>5</sup> is therefore an important subject. Every language must be spoken according to the rules of grammar<sup>6</sup> in order to be correct; and here the English were sadly deficient in having no grammar; barbarisms and vulgarisms must be guarded against, in order to keep it pure; and here again the English were at fault in having no Dictionary of acknowledged excellence to determine the use of words. The French and Italians had "Academies and dictionaries for improving and fixing the languages,"<sup>8</sup> but there were none in English. Such being the

1. Katy-II-552.

2. Godson-II-44.

3. Katy-II-250.

4. Son-Sayle-132.

5. Letters to Madden-23.

6. Son-Bradshaw-1.

7. Katy-II-552.

8. Son-Sayle-133.





conditions, Johnson's dictionary and grammar which had been announced, were eagerly being awaited, by the educated English people.

With these essential things lacking there was only one way to acquire, not only elegance and style, but even purity and correctness of speech; and that was by the careful study of the best writers. This, with observation of the methods of living speakers, and care in one's own conversation at all times, would, in time, build up a style at the same time clear, correct, easy and graceful.<sup>2</sup> Chesterfield tells us of his own care in the use of words, "For forty years, I have never spoken nor written a single word without considering whether it was a good one or a bad one, and whether I could not find out a better one in its place."<sup>3</sup> For he realized the importance of speaking well continually in order to build up an elegant style. "I was early convinced of the importance and powers of eloquence; and from that moment I applied myself to it. I resolved not to utter a word, even in common conversation that should not be most expressive and most elegant, that the language could supply me with for that purpose; by which means I have acquired such a certain degree of habitual eloquence, that I must now really take some pains, if I would express myself very

2. Son-Sayle-25.

3. Ibid-135.



inelegantly."<sup>1</sup> The result of Chesterfield's painstaking care was that he was known as one of the most eloquent orators of an age of brilliant speakers.<sup>2</sup>

In his opinion, moderate matter, adorned with all the beauties and elegancies of style is to be preferred to the strongest matter in the world, ill worded, and ill delivered.<sup>3</sup>

A thorough knowledge of the English language is especially necessary for a person if he wishes to be distinguished as an orator, and without oratory, he thinks, it is impossible to rise. "No man" says he, "can make a fortune or a figure in this country without speaking, and speaking well, in public".<sup>4</sup> "The nature of our constitution makes eloquence more useful and more necessary in this country than in any other in Europe."<sup>5</sup> In fact, he thinks that all the learning you can have is not "worth one groat" without oratory<sup>6</sup> in practical value.

The business of oratory is to persuade,<sup>7</sup> and to please is a great step toward persuading.<sup>8</sup> An orator is enabled to please by the ornamental parts of his speaking,

1. Son-Sayle, 202.

2. Horace Walpole speaks of him as "the finest orator I ever heard!" (Walpole's Letters to Mann-Dec.15,1743). And Lord Mahon observes that Walpole had heard his own father, Pitt, Pultney, and Carteret. (Mahon's History of England, Vol.III.-326.

3. Son-Sayle-131.

4. " " 178.

5. " Braddshaw-234.

6. " Sayle-178.





by his elegance and style, by using grammatically pure sentences, adorned with proper figures of speech; all of which are to be acquired by the study of the best authors. He pleases also by his grace and harmony and by a distinct and clear enunciation. More depends on manner than on matter, he thinks, and it is more important in a public speech, to please, than to inform.<sup>1</sup> "Give them one or two round and harmonious periods in a speech, which they will retain and repeat; and they will go home -- well satisfied. --- Most people have ears, but few have judgment; tickle those ears and -- you will catch their judgments."<sup>2</sup> Chesterfield thought that a successful orator was to be made, not born.

"Orator fit"<sup>3</sup> is the text of many a discourse<sup>4</sup> for everybody by proper care can speak grammatically, choose good words, be clear and perspicuous, and have grace, if they will.<sup>3</sup> "The vulgar -- look upon a speaker and a comet with the same astonishment and admiration, taking them both for praeternatural phenomena"<sup>5</sup> but educated people know that it is only by careful study that an orator is made. "Purity and elegance of style, with a graceful elocution, cover a multitude of faults"<sup>6</sup>, and every man may acquire these if he will, by devoting his attention to the best authors and orators.<sup>7</sup>

1. Son-Sayle-201.

2. Son-Sayle-137.

3. Son-Bradshaw-21.

4. Blackwood's Magazine, May, 1868; 530.

5. Son-Sayle-136.

6. Ibid. 134.

7. Son-Bradshaw-301.



In writing, the same attention is paid to manner, as in speaking. First of all the hand-writing should be neat, legible and genteel.<sup>1</sup> It is necessary to make this familiar while young, "that you may hereafter have nothing but matter to think of, when you have occasion to write to kings and ministers."<sup>2</sup> The spelling should be absolutely correct, for no man is allowed to spell ill;<sup>3</sup> it would ridicule a person forever to write a letter containing a mis-spelled word. Reading with care he thinks would secure everybody from this disgrace.<sup>4</sup>

Letters are the most important things which the ordinary man writes. For a man employed in public office, frequent business letters are especially necessary. These must, above all things, be clear.<sup>5</sup> "This necessary clearness implies a correctness, without excluding an elegance of style."<sup>5</sup> Besides, there is an "elegant simplicity and dignity of style absolutely necessary for letters of business"<sup>6</sup> There must of course be no display of wit,<sup>7</sup> no affected turns, no pedantic quotations or allusions. The subject of all business letters is necessarily furnished,<sup>7</sup> therefore, to one who has sufficient knowledge of the subject matter, all that is necessary is clearness and perspicuity of treatment.

1. Son-Bradshaw-120.

2. Son-Sayle-194.

3. Ibid. 224.

4. Son-Bradshaw-373.

5. Son-Sayle-222.

6. Ibid-223.

7. Godson- II - 223.



The best models are those of Cardinal d'Ossat<sup>1</sup>, which show how letters of business ought to be written.

Friendly letters "should be easy and natural, and convey to the persons to whom we send them, just what we would say to these persons if we were with them."<sup>2</sup> They ought to be "familiar conversations between absent friends."<sup>3</sup> Those letters to real friends take little trouble to write, for "the heart leaves the understanding little or nothing to do. The matter and the expression present themselves"<sup>4</sup>, and they may be written upon whatever subject lies uppermost in the mind, whether moral reflections<sup>5</sup> or witty stories.

The best examples of friendly letters are those of Cicero to Atticus, and Mme. Sevigne's gay and witty letters to her daughter.<sup>6</sup>

Here trifling letters, are the hardest kind to write. They have no subject, and are to writing what small talk or "badinage" is to conversation.<sup>4</sup> They are all ornament, and usually are made up of wit and flattery. They are often necessary and therefore one should be able to write them so that they seem natural and do not smell of the lamp.<sup>7</sup>

1. Son-Sayle-60.

2. Son-Bradshaw-24.

3. Ibid-154.

4. Godson, II-223.

5. Son-Sayle-62.

6. " " 40.

7. Godson, II -223.





As for writing poetry, Chesterfield thinks "a Poet is born, not made".<sup>1</sup> He advises all people whose genius does not hurry them into poetry, whether they will or not, to refrain from it,<sup>2</sup> for a true poet must have invention and imagination. "Everybody can by application, make themselves masters of the mechanical parts of poetry,"<sup>1</sup> however, "which consists of numbers, rhymes, measure, and harmony of verse",<sup>1</sup> but the spark of genius must be given from Above, to make a true poet.

Of the English writers, Chesterfield considers Addison, Swift, Pope, and Dryden as the "ornaments of our nation".<sup>3</sup> They it was who "banished false taste out of England, proscribed Puns, Quibbles, Acrostics, etc" and defended the rights of good sense so that false wit made no headway here.<sup>4</sup> Swift he places above Lucian, and Pope above Horace.<sup>5</sup>

Of the authors whom we now consider greatest, he has little to say. Milton, he "can't possibly read -- through."<sup>6</sup> He has indeed "some sublime passages, some prodigious flashes of light, but that light is often followed by "darkness visible." <sup>6</sup>

1. Son-Bradshaw-21.

2. To Faulkner- p 3.

3. Maty- II-270 .

4. Son-Sayle-161.

5. Maty-II 282.

6. Son-Bradshaw-558.



Shakespeare, he thinks, sometimes deserves the best reception, sometimes the worst.<sup>1</sup> "If his genius had been cultivated, those beauties which we so justly admire in him would have been undisguised by those extravagances and that nonsense with which they are frequently accompanied."<sup>2</sup>

Although, in compliance with the popular opinion of Shakespeare, Chesterfield had his godson's picture painted with a copy of his works in his hand,<sup>3</sup> yet he thought little of him, himself. The fact that he considered other English dramatists of greater importance than Shakespeare, is shown in such an expression as "A Wicherly or a Congreve will never rise again on the English stage."<sup>4</sup> Mr. Tovey in an essay on Chesterfield's Letters, points out a manifest instance of how small a place Shakespeare really had in Chesterfield's thoughts. "He has occasion to introduce the Earl of Huntingdon to Mr. Ju Boccage, and he presents him as a descendent in the direct line of that 'Milord Hastings' who plays so considerable a part in the tragedy which the lady had doubtless read of 'Jane Shore'," <sup>5</sup> entirely disregarding those far greater plays in which even today we read of the same character.

Dr. Johnson, Chesterfield acknowledges to be of superior authority in the English language, and commends

1. Maty-II-270.
2. Son-Sayle-72.
3. Godson-II -243.
4. Common Sense-MatyI-50.
5. D.C.Tovey-Reviews and Essays in English Literature London,1837, page 57.





55.  
him for his intended Dictionary and Grammar! Even after the famous quarrel between the two great men, we hear of no disrespectful statements from him concerning Johnson's writings. Indeed, Boswell tells us that he read Johnson's irate letter to a friend and said, "this man has great powers", pointed out the severest passages, and observed how well they were expressed." <sup>2</sup>

The English novels, like those of the French are "extravagant works" <sup>3</sup> and worth reading only that one may be able to talk intelligently upon subjects which other people know. <sup>3</sup> For the most part, they are "endless heaps of the same stuff." The "absurd romances", and sentimental novels of the time are all idle and frivolous books. <sup>4</sup>

He characterizes the Arabian Nights and Mogul Tales, which the Romanticists were introducing into England at that time, as "Oriental ravings and extravagances" <sup>5</sup>, and considered them as foolish, and useless.

From the preceding, we see that Chesterfield's taste in literature was for the most part strictly classical. Although he claimed that his rule for judging writings was by the degree of pleasure they gave him <sup>6</sup>, and not by the iron-clad rules of any school, yet for the most part he was under the sway of classical ideas, and unable to wander far away from them.

1. World-Katy I, 166, 167.

2. Boswell's Life of Johnson-Malone '60-p 69.

3. Son-Sayle-242.

4. Son-Bradshaw-317.

5. Son-Bradshaw-317.

6. Katy-II-282.



He thought that "nothing else can please in the long run except something founded upon truth and nature"<sup>1</sup>, and that these ought to please forever and in all places;<sup>1</sup> and his ideas of what truth and nature are, were the ideas of the school of Pope and Boileau.

1. Godson-II. 180.



## III.

## HISTORY -- PHILOSOPHY--SCIENCE--ARTS.

Just as the Languages make the man of all countries, so History makes the man of all Ages.<sup>1</sup> Nobody who claims to be educated or cultured can neglect it, as it is a common subject of conversation,<sup>2</sup> and is spoken of, more or less, in all good companies.<sup>3</sup> Even women should have a fair knowledge of History, so as not to appear to disadvantage in conversation<sup>4</sup>

For one who expects to be a minister of State, it is absolutely necessary.<sup>5</sup> Modern History especially is more important than ancient.<sup>6</sup> In fact, it is "the most useful of all acquisitions."<sup>7</sup> One who is to be the representative of a nation, must necessarily know how other ministers have acted, and the consequence of their actions. History should serve as a mirror for youth. It is the "record of mankind in which you will find various examples of good and ill!"<sup>8</sup> One ought to "emulate the virtues and abhor the crimes which you will meet with in it",<sup>9</sup> "for it is in truth an account of the crimes and follies, as well as of the virtues and wisdom of

1. Godson- II-162 and I -209.
2. New Plan of Education, London 1777, 141.
3. Godson II -136.
4. Maty II - 476.
5. Godson- II -32.
6. Son-Sayle-66.
7. A.C. Stanhope, 323.
8. Godson-II - 59.
9. Ibid. II - 32.





mankind." <sup>1</sup> In fact the principal utility of History consists in the examples it gives us of the virtues and vices of those who have gone before us." <sup>2</sup> In examples of good, Roman history abounds. It furnishes more examples of magnanimity than any other, <sup>2</sup> and ought to "animate and excite us to the love and practice of virtue, by showing us the regard and veneration that was always paid to great and virtuous men, in the times in which they lived, and the praise and glory with which their names are perpetuated and transmitted down to our own times." <sup>2</sup>

History also should teach us something of human nature, which, throughout the ages never changes. "Ce qu' on appelle l' Histoire de l' Homme, qu'il ne faut pas ignorer, si on veut connoitre les autres ou soi-meme." <sup>3</sup> Indeed by teaching this knowledge of the characters of men, history may help greatly, and by its assistance, "youth may, in some measure, acquire the experience of age." <sup>4</sup>

Chesterfield begins his child on the study of this "most useful of all acquisitions" <sup>5</sup> at an early age. He commences by sending him in his letters detached scraps of interesting men and events from ancient and modern history; he also gives him a short general history of all nations, with pictures to attract his interest. <sup>6</sup> After the boy had

1. Godson II - 32.

2. Son-Sayle-2.

3. Godson, I - 159.

4. New Plan of Educ. London, 1777 - 42.

5. A.C. Stanhope-323.

6. "Puffenforff's Introduction to Histories of all Nations." Naty II - 477. A.C. Stanhope 323.



received a thorough knowledge of general history as a whole,<sup>1</sup> he had him make a more careful study of the most important eras.<sup>2</sup> This he thought, was preferably made in the native country<sup>3</sup> of the history which was being studied, and should be supplemented by research work in memoirs,<sup>4</sup> letters<sup>5</sup> and more extensive histories.<sup>5</sup> If the particular event studied is of recent occurrence, conversation<sup>6</sup> with people who know about it is another means of obtaining valuable information. Almost all modern accounts can be verified, if true, if only the proper amount of care be taken.<sup>7</sup> In this it is necessary to "certum pete finem",<sup>7</sup> and "do not interrupt by dipping and deviating into other books unrelative to it. But consult only the most authentic histories, letters, memoirs, and negotiations relative to that great transaction."<sup>8</sup>

Chesterfield is opposed to the custom of pupils loading their memories indiscriminately with all kinds of historical food.<sup>9</sup> A general survey of history as a whole should be obtained, and aside from that, only the most important events studied carefully. Those events which he considered of importance were not only those which had great consequences, but also the local events, which had

1. Letters, Sentences & Maxims; Howard, 137.

2. Son-Bradshaw-364.

3. Ibid. 106.

4. Son-Sayle-247.

5. Son-Bradshaw-365.

6. Son-Sayle-247.

7. Son-Sayle-247.

8. Son-Sayle-247.

9. Ibid - 225.





a far reaching indirect influence.<sup>1</sup> Of men, the great statesmen rather than the great conquerors are to be studied, and admired.<sup>2</sup> He depllores the fact that the shining characters in History are usually those of conquerors, "who are in truth only illustrious robbers, and murderers; while the solid virtues of Legislators, so beneficial to Society are, in a manner, neglected. Every school-boy has heard of and is apt to admire that mad Macedonian, Alexander the Great, and few know Aristides the Just, who was an honor to humanity, as the other was a disgrace to it."<sup>3</sup>

The greatest man who ever lived, was, he thought, Peter the Great of Russia,<sup>4</sup> "qui , par la force de son genie seul, sans culture, et sans exemple, concut le plan, non seulement de barbarizer, mais de civilizer, les belles lettres, la marine, et la discipline militaire; et il executa son plan en trente cinq ans".<sup>5</sup>

In studying history one should try to combine cause and effect, rather than remember the mere facts of history.<sup>6</sup> Yet this is, sometimes, very difficult to do. Even in individual characters we cannot always get at the true motives for their actions. "Our best conjectures

1. Son-Pradshaw-116.

2. Godson-II -70,71.

3. Ibid, II - 33.

4. Godson- I - 181.

5. Godson-I-181.

6. Son-Sayle-226.



as to the true springs of actions are but very uncertain,"<sup>61.</sup>  
for complex character has often more to do in great trans-  
actions than prudence and sound policy.<sup>2</sup> For this reason,  
"I look with some contempt upon those refining and sagacious  
historians who ascribe all, even the most common events, to  
some deep political cause. Whereas man is made up of in-  
consistencies, and no man acts invariably up to his predom-  
inant character. The wisest men sometimes act weakly, and  
the weakest sometimes wisely."<sup>3</sup> Summing up his views of  
criticism he says, "In judging of causes and motives of  
events, use your own judgment, after carefully weighing the  
facts of different authors. Don't forget that even great men  
have sometimes very mean and trifling causes for action,  
for so various and inconsistent is human nature, so strong  
and so changeful are our passions, so fluctuating our  
wills, and so much are our minds influenced by accidents  
of our bodies, that every man is more the man of the day  
than a regular and consequential character!"<sup>4</sup>

Ancient history, unlike modern, cannot now be  
verified. We must know it however although it be uncertain,  
and although many things are absolutely unbelievable, because  
it forms the subject matter of many conversations and writings

1. Son-Bradshaw-105.

2. Ibid. 243.

3. Ibid. 104.

4. Son-Bradshaw-135.



Thus it would be a shame to be ignorant of the story of the appearance of Caesar's Ghost, although of course no one believes it.<sup>1</sup> All such things are "universally received upon the faith of the best historians" and whether true or false we have them as other people have them.

History, whether Ancient or Modern, should never be read without the help of maps and chronological tables.<sup>2</sup> These should be constantly referred to, for without them, "History is only a confused heap of facts."<sup>3</sup>

The two related subjects, Geography and Chronology, are of use only in the study of history. They must necessarily accompany it, in order that a person may have a clear idea of it, for it is necessary to know, not only what happened, but also when it happened, and where it happened.<sup>4</sup>

In Geography, ancient maps must be studied in connection with Ancient History, because of the great change that has taken place in the maps of Europe since the days of Greek and Roman History.<sup>5</sup> Modern Geography is to be consulted not only in the study of modern history, but also in the newspaper accounts of the events in the wars of the present time.<sup>5</sup> Chesterfield urges his boy to consult his maps to see just where every battle is fought, and every army

1. Son-Bradshaw-107.

2. Ibid. 113.

3. Son-Sayle-155.

4. New Plan of Education-London-1777, p 25.

5. Son-Bradshaw-7.





stationed, in the war which was in progress at the time.<sup>1</sup>

Geography is also of use to a person in travel.<sup>2</sup>

The subject is easy to forget, and can be remembered only by continual reference and study.<sup>3</sup>

A large amount of political knowledge was necessary for one who was being fitted for a ministerial life. The fond father was looking forward with anxious expectation to certain public offices for his son which he must make himself capable of filling -- a member of Parliament, and a possible Secretary of State, at home, and a foreign minister to some influential court, abroad. For this reason, his education was early begun along political lines;<sup>4</sup> it was from the beginning "calculated for the department of foreign affairs."<sup>5</sup>

Thus he was given more history than was commonly taught to a child, and the constitutional part of it, especially, was emphasised. Later, on his travels, he was instructed to learn the "constitution, and civil and military state, of every country in Europe."<sup>6</sup> He studied "civil law and the public law of the Empire, in Germany, where it was best to be taught."<sup>7</sup> In his travel through all the European countries he is expected to inform himself of the government, strength, revenue, commerce,<sup>8</sup> manufactures,<sup>9</sup> military forces,<sup>10</sup> resources,

1. Godson-I. 137.

2. Son-Bradshaw-133.

3. Son-Sayle-246.

4. Son-Bradshaw-730

5. Ibid. 114.

6. Son-Sayle-79.

7. Maty II 32, 313.

8. Son-Bradshaw-91.

9. Ibid-235.

10. Son-Sayle-61.



customs and manners<sup>1</sup>, of each country.

These things Chesterfield thought would be very important knowledge for one who in the future might have occasion to use these data in treating with the countries. They were to be learned best by conversation<sup>2</sup> with people of quality who had the desired knowledge<sup>2</sup> and by personal observation.

Court life,<sup>3</sup> and the ways of ministers were also necessary things with which to familiarize himself on his travels, in order that he might become acquainted early in life, with the media and the etiquette of his position.<sup>4</sup>

Chesterfield thought that one who acquired, while young, all this practical knowledge bearing upon ministerial life, would make himself necessary to his home government so that he could not fail in being well employed. "The harvest is so great, the laborers so few, that if you make yourself master of them, you will make yourself necessary, first as a foreign, and then as a domestic minister,"<sup>5</sup> and this is all that was necessary for speedy advancement. The foreign minister, like the orator, must be made: his success is due, not to unusual ability, but to proper training and the ambition to succeed: "I am very sure," he says,

1. Son-Sayle-39.

2. Ibid-103, 30, 37.

3. Son-Bradshaw-392.

4. Son-Sayle-332.

5. Son-Bradshaw-33.





"that anyman of common understanding, may, by proper culture, care, attention and labour, make of himself whatever he pleases."<sup>1</sup>

Of Philosophy, Chesterfield has little to say. Knowledge, he thinks, "is absolutely necessary: But knowledge has a most extensive meaning and as the life of man is not long enough to acquire, nor his mind capable of entertaining and digesting all parts of knowledge",<sup>2</sup> certain parts must be selected as of prime importance, and the rest wholly or partially excluded.

Philosophy was one of the latter subjects. He did not even desire his son to be a "sublime and unintelligible Metaphysician",<sup>3</sup> and a general notion of the science of Ethics was all of that study which was necessary.<sup>4</sup> He also passed lightly over Logic, as a science, and all that we hear of in his requirements from his son, is a general outline of Locke's book on Logic.<sup>4</sup> He did not wish him to be a subtle logician.<sup>3</sup>

But Chesterfield did insist upon the practical use of reason, and demanded even of a child that he should think to a certain extent, for himself. "You are old enough now to make observations upon what you learn" he writes to his

1. Son-Sayle-25.

2. Son-Bradshaw-112.

3. Godson-II-227.

4. Son-Bradshaw-217.



eight year old son,<sup>1</sup> and to his godson at the same age,  
 "It is high time for you to begin to think and act like  
 a rational creature, and to be no longer -- a mere machine,  
 wound up like a watch."<sup>2</sup> "An honest man," he says, "will no  
 more live upon the credit of other people's thoughts than  
 of their fortune,"<sup>3</sup> but will reason for himself and thus  
 prove not only his ability for self-sustenance, but also his  
 very right to existence. "(For) upon the principle 'Cogito  
 ergo sum' of Descartes, how many people do not exist!"<sup>4</sup>  
 he says; and thinks that all learning will be of little  
 value to one who does not think and reason upon it for  
 himself. "One reads to know other people's thoughts; but  
 if we take them upon trust, without examining and comparing  
 them with our own, it is merely living upon other people's  
 scraps, or retailing other people's goods."<sup>5</sup>

For science, Chesterfield showed the disregard  
 typical of the 18th Century. "He had no taste for abstract  
 science when it could not be turned to some practical purpose,  
 and as most of the sciences at that time had not reached  
 a sufficient degree of perfection to be useful, he paid little  
 attention to them.

1. Son-Sayle-5.

2. Godson-II-46.

3. Ibid. 180.

4. Ibid. 263.

5. Son-Bradshaw-11.

6. Carnarvon's Memoir of Lord Chesterfield, 29.,  
 from Mahon's History of England, Vol. III p 322.



Of Astronomy, however a general notion was necessary, not only because it is a frequent subject of conversation, and must therefore be known,<sup>1</sup> but also as a matter of curiosity.<sup>2</sup> He is anxious that his son should have a clear notion of "the vast and immense planetary system, which will open a scene -- which -- deserves-- attention as a matter of curiosity".<sup>2</sup> Aside from mere satisfaction of curiosity, moreover, "it will give you greater and consequently juster, ideas of that eternal and omnipotent Being who contrived, made, and still preserves this comparatively very little orb which we at present inhabit."<sup>2</sup>

Chesterfield however advises him not to delve into it deeply enough to "absorb your attention and puzzle your intellect."<sup>3</sup> Fontenelle's "Pluralite des Mondes", will give an account of the present system and the history of all former ones, which is "all you need know on the subject!"<sup>4</sup>

Natural history he considered only as an idle curious study, and in no way useful. As a matter of curiosity and general information however, a little of it should be

1. Son-Bradshaw-436.

2. Ibid. 173.

3. Son-Bradshaw-199.

4. Ibid. 426.





known. "You will find at least as much as you need to know in a superficial but pretty French book, entitled 'Spectacle de la Nature', which will amuse you while you read it, and give you a sufficient notion of the various parts of nature. I advise you to read it at leisure hours, but that part of nature which you have begun to study, Astronomy, is of much greater importance, and deserves much more attention!"<sup>1</sup> The observation of natural curiosities also is all very well in travel, provided it does not "take up the room of better things".<sup>2</sup> He has strong objection to any detailed study of "jinerack" natural history of fossils, minerals, plants, etc.,<sup>3</sup> and speaks with contempt of certain "blockheads", "who might have collected shells with success"<sup>4</sup>, since they could do nothing else.

He thinks it is due to "little minds, which, mistake little objects for great ones",<sup>5</sup> that people devote their time to such studies, and that it is characteristic of these trifling and frivolous minds that "knick-knacks, butterflies, shells, insects, etc., are the objects of their most serious researches."<sup>6</sup>

1. Son-Bradshaw-177.

2. Ibid. 235.

3. Son-Sayle-190.

4. World, Naty II-197.

5. Son-Bradshaw-177.

6. Son-Sayle-30.



Indeed he thinks that it is only to the fact that many people have not common sense enough to distinguish the really important things in life, that "we owe the numerous and frivolous tribe of insect-mongers, shell-mongers, and pursuers and driers of butterflies",<sup>1</sup> which he sees about him.

Of Mathematics, Chesterfield desired his son to have a general knowledge, but nevertheless he did not want him to be "a profound mathematician."<sup>2</sup> Arithmetic is useful and therefore necessary; and aside from its intrinsic values, it helps to fix the attention of a thoughtless child.<sup>3</sup> One must dip into Geometry and know something of it,<sup>4</sup> because it was expected of a gentleman. But it is not necessary to go deep in it, or take enough to "absorb your attention or puzzle your intellect", but only take enough not to be grossly ignorant of it.<sup>5</sup>

For this purpose, the first seven books of Euclid was<sup>6</sup> deemed sufficient.

Mathematics is classed by him as one of those "abstruse sciences" which it is right to have a general notion of, so as not to appear quite ignorant of them,

1. Son-Bradshaw-177.

2. Godson-II-227.

3. A. C. Stanhope-354.

4. Son-Bradshaw-112.

5. Son-Sayle-190.

6. Son-Bradshaw-426.





when they happen, as they sometimes do, to be the topics of conversation; "but a deep knowledge of them requires too much time, and engrosses the mind too much."<sup>1</sup>

The Liberal Arts are held by Chesterfield to be necessary in the education of every gentleman; for an intimate knowledge of them, and a professed admiration for them gains for a man a reputation for culture. Thus, painting and sculpture is very "becoming" a man of fashion,<sup>2</sup> and Chesterfield desires that his son shall acquire a "liberal taste for them"<sup>3</sup> by studying the famous Italian Masterpieces<sup>4</sup>; yet he does not wish him to descend into the "Minuties", which, he says our "modern virtuosi most affectually dwell upon."<sup>3</sup> This, like other knowledge, was to be general, and not "foolishly particular." We may suspect that Chesterfield's chief regard for the Arts was for appearance's sake only, for his personal opinion of Art and kindred subjects seems to be shown in the following: "I reckon all places where eyes only are employed, as being worth seeing, but not worth staying at. Remains of antiquity, public buildings, paintings, and sculptures, ought to be seen and that with a proper degree of attention, but this is soon done, for they are only outsides."<sup>5</sup>

1. Son-Bradshaw-426.

2. " " 219.

3. " " 259.

4. Son-Boyle-103.

5. Son-Bradshaw-255.



Drawing, he recommended for a girl, as it is a genteel<sup>1</sup>, domestic amusement,<sup>2</sup> for a woman, and takes up a great deal of time, supplying amusement for many idle hours,<sup>3</sup> and thus keeping her out of harm's way.<sup>2</sup> For the same reason, it is not desirable for a boy to study.

Chesterfield's attitude toward the study of Music is peculiar. He did not place it among the Liberal Arts<sup>4</sup> but rather, among the "illiberal pleasures."<sup>5</sup> He considers it a proof of the decline of taste in Italy, that they place Music among the Liberal Arts, and higher than sculpture and painting.<sup>4</sup> It is not that music in itself is not all right, but performing in it is dangerous.<sup>6</sup> "A taste of fiddling and piping is unbecoming a man of fashion"<sup>7</sup> he says, "If you love music, hear it; go to operas, concerts, and pay fiddlers to play to you; but I insist upon your neither piping nor fiddling yourself. It puts a gentleman in a very frivolous, contemptible light; brings him in a great deal of bad company; and takes up a great deal of time, which might be better employed. Few things would mortify me

1. A. C. Stanhope-355.

2. Ibid. 349.

3. Ibid. 364.

4. Son-Bradshaw-219.

5. Ibid-203.

6. Waty's Memoirs-I - 190.

7. Pratt's Life of Chesterfield. II. 6.



more than to see you bearing a part in a concert with a fiddle under your chin, or a pipe in your mouth."<sup>1</sup>

Another subject to which Chesterfield often refers is that of physical exercises. They are necessary in forming his body, and giving it grace, just as mental exercises are required for the cultivation of the mind. "Apply yourself diligently to your exercises, for though the doing them well is not supremely meritorious, the doing them ill, is illiberal, vulgur, and ridiculous"<sup>2</sup> because it implies a lack of activity and grace. "Your exercises", he says, "will civilize and fashion your body and your limbs, and give you, if you will but take it, l'air d'un honnete homme".<sup>3</sup> The principal exercises which he required are riding, fencing and dancing. Riding well is a graceful accomplishment, "and besides may save you many a fall hereafter."<sup>4</sup> Fencing well will give grace to the body, and may be the means of saving one's own life sometime, in an age when duels and single combats are common.<sup>4</sup> Dancing well, he thought, is absolutely necessary, in order to sit, stand and walk well;<sup>4</sup> and attention to all the exercises is important in order to give one that grace which will enable him to be admired by all mankind.

1.Son-Bradshaw-203.

2.Ibid-372.

3.Son-Sayle-77.

4.Son-Bradshaw-443.





## IV.

RELIGION AND MORALITY.

Chesterfield has often been accused by critics of being lax in his moral and religious teaching. This criticism seems to me to be unjust, however; he was emphatic in his requirements of both. He places religious and moral training at the head of his educational system, and states repeatedly that he considers them the most essential part of all. He did not, it is true, speak of them so often in his letters, as of certain other things, but this may be explained in two ways: first, he did not suspect his son of being deficient in these things, as he knew him to be in manners; therefore, they did not require such great emphasis; and secondly, he entrusted the greater part of the boy's moral and religious training to the clergyman whom he employed for him as a tutor, and whom he considered as being more capable of teaching these necessary studies than he himself was.<sup>1</sup> Besides, he thought that anyone with good common sense ought to need very little teaching in them.<sup>2</sup> "Religion and Morality --- speak best for themselves,"<sup>2</sup> was his opinion; and after the first principles of each have been planted in a child's mind, his Reason is a sufficient guide,<sup>2</sup> under all circumstances

1. Godson-Vol.II-p 250; Son-Sayle, 144.

2. Son-Sayle-p 144.



if he will but consult and follow it.

In his own religion, Chesterfield followed the "Line of the Golden Mean", that important, yet invisible boundary which "divides Superstition from Impiety."<sup>1</sup> It is as necessary to refrain from acting and talking "like a missionary" as like an infidel,<sup>2</sup> he thought, and consequently all of his utterances on religion are marked by great moderation. He was a member of the Church of England, and although in his later life he held rather liberal views, he never became an open sceptic, nor favored in the least, a rupture with the Established Church.

Those critics who ~~dis~~credit him with having ~~any~~ <sup>no</sup> real religious feeling, and who think that it was because of "his experience of the practical results of infidelity"<sup>3</sup> that he clung to an appearance of religion, seem to base their theory upon such remarks of Chesterfield's as the one in which he blames Voltaire for writing against the worship and belief of his country, even if convinced it was wrong, "on account of the disturbance and disorder it would occasion",<sup>4</sup> and for this reason, "no man ought to break through the order that is established!"<sup>5</sup>

1. Son-Sayle-98.

2. Ibid-144.

3. Dublin University Magazine, July 1875, p 55.

4. Letters to Friends, Maty II - 34.

5. Ibid - II - 240.





This same idea of the practical view of the appearance of religion is shown in the following well known expression: "A wise atheist, (if such a thing there is) would, for his own interest and character in this world, pretend to some religion (because) everyman is the worse looked upon, and the less trusted, for being thought to have no religion, in spite of all the pompous and special epithets he may assume, of Esprit fort, Free-thinker, or Moral Philosopher."<sup>1</sup>

Such expressions alone, it is true, would make one suspect him of being one of those "wise atheists", but we must remember in the beginning of this same letter, his proposal to confine himself at that time to "the decency, utility, and necessity, of scrupulously preserving the appearance of -- religion"<sup>1</sup>, for concerning the Reality of it, his son already knew.

Moreover, he definitely states his belief in the existence of God, in the form of which belief he shows himself to somewhat of a Deist. "I have neither read nor intend to read those (sermons) which are meant to prove the existence of God; because it seems to me too great a disparagement of that reason which he has given us -- to require any other proofs of his existence, than those which the whole and every part of the Creation affords us.

1. Son-Sayle-p 145.



If I believe my own existence, I must believe his: it cannot be proved a priori as some have idly attempted to do, and cannot be doubted of a posteriori. Cato says very justly, 'And that he is, all nature cries aloud'.<sup>1</sup> Yet Chesterfield, although he thinks God is revealed in all Nature, is not properly speaking a Deist, because he believes in the inspiration of the Bible. It was dictated by the Spirit of Truth, he says, and "you -- ought to believe every word of it."<sup>2</sup>

The majority of Chesterfield's views, in fact, are perfectly consistent with sound religious principles. He confesses the weakness of the flesh when he says "I have been as wicked, though not as wise as -- Solomon,"<sup>3</sup> yet he puts his trust in "God, who knows the strength of human passions, and the weakness of human reason, (and who) will rather mercifully pardon than justly punish, acknowledged errors."<sup>4</sup> In his old age, when he was oppressed by deafness and physical suffering, he finds a comfort in his religion. "Philosophy and confidence in the mercy of my Creator, mutually assist me in bearing my share of physical ills without murmuring"<sup>5</sup> he says; yet when he realized that the usefulness of his life was over, and his health was gone, he prayed to be released from life, for

1. To Friends, Maty II, 487.

2. To Godson- II-31.

3. Maty II, To Friends, p 507.

4. Ibid, To Friends, 482.

5. Ibid, " " 539.



he was not afraid to die,<sup>1</sup> and he preferred rather that "death should distract at once, than groan longer under the burthen."<sup>2</sup>

The religious duties which Chesterfield impressed upon his boy from time to time, are simple, but it seems to me, sufficient, if they were properly carried out. They are all summed up in the great commandment given by the Lord himself-- "Love God and keep his commandments."<sup>3</sup> These commandments he thinks are "written in the heart of every rational creature,"<sup>3</sup> and the Conscience will always remind one of them, if he will but consult and attend to it.<sup>4</sup> This Conscience is the very best guide we have, and should always be kept clear, "for of all reproaches, those of conscience are the most cruel"<sup>5</sup>. The principal duties which our conscience will inform us of if we properly love God are Adoration and Thanksgiving to God<sup>4</sup>, and love and good works toward our fellow men.<sup>4</sup>

Chesterfield was far in advance of his age in the toleration which he expresses for all forms of religion. He thinks that it is "as natural, and as allowable, that another man should differ in opinion from me, as that I should differ from him, and that if we are both sincere, we are both blameless, and should consequently have mutual

1. Maty-To Friends-214.

2. Ibid " " 567.

3. Godson-II-47.

4. Godson-I-104.

5. Godson-II-143.





indulgence for each other!"<sup>1</sup> Every man's reason must be his guide, he thinks, "and I may as well expect, that every man should be of my size and complexion, as that he should reason just as I do. Every man seeks for truth; but God only knows who has found it. It is therefore, unjust to persecute, as it is absurd to ridicule people for those several opinions which they cannot help entertaining, upon the conviction of their reason."<sup>2</sup>

As "the object of all public worships in the world is the same, --- that great eternal Being, who created everything," it is foolish of one denomination to persecute another. "Each sect thinks its own the best", he says, "and I know of no infallible judge in this world to decide which is the best."<sup>3</sup> Indeed even if one were sure that his own religion was right, and others wrong, he should pity, but not persecute nor laugh at the erring ones. "The blindness of the understanding is as much to be pitied as blindness of the eyes, and there is neither jest nor guilt in a man's losing his way in either case."<sup>4</sup>

Although he was a member of the Church of England,<sup>5</sup> his broad view of religion included all Christians. When in a Catholic country he did not hesitate to attend their services, nor even to kneel before the Pope.<sup>6</sup>

1. Son-Bradshaw-194.

2. Ibid. 58.

3. Son-Sayle-61.

4. Son-Bradshaw-57.

5. Ibid-194.

6. Son-Sayle-125.



He included in this universal toleration, even the down-trodden Jews, and was in favor of a Naturalization Bill being passed, for them by Parliament.<sup>1</sup> He stopped short of the Mohammedans however, whose teaching as set forth in the Alkoran, was, he thought, extravagant and foolish.<sup>2</sup> But every branch and sect of Christianity should have full freedom of worship, and his repugnance for persecution is summed up in his expression, "I would as soon murder a man for his estate, as prosecute him for his religious errors."<sup>3</sup>

In morality, Chesterfield laid down but one rule-- and that was the Golden Rule. All a man's moral duties are summed up in the one sentence, "Do to others as you would have them do to you",<sup>4</sup> and if he asks himself before every doubtful action "Should I be willing that this should be done to me?" and then abides by the decision of his conscience, he can never err very widely.<sup>5</sup> This, he thinks is the Common Sense, as well as the Bible Rule; for any man's reason will confirm it at once as being the only rule consistent with Justice and true happiness.<sup>6</sup> Detailed dissertations on Morality only perplex<sup>7</sup> and they cannot make one understand his duty any better than mere common sense and reason, which are the best counsellors<sup>8</sup> that can be found.

1. Son-Bradshaw-591.

2. Godson-II-73.

3. Maty II-496.

4. Godson-II-80

5. Godson-I-104.

6. Son-Bradshaw-152.

7. Ibid-166.

8. Ibid-153.





In morals, there is a line which divides "ostentatious Puritanism from criminal Relaxation."<sup>1</sup> This is the path which should be followed; it is "The Line of the Golden Mean." Chesterfield no more desired his son to a prude than to be a rake; the point midway between, is the desirable one.

A man's character must first of all be kept clean. This is most essential for his happiness, for "conscious virtue is the only solid foundation of all happiness; for riches, rank, power or whatever in the common acceptation of the word, is supposed to constitute happiness, will never even quiet, much less cure, the inward pangs of guilt."<sup>2</sup>

The reputation of a pure character is very necessary for a man who wishes to rise in the world, and this reputation can be built up only by the "strictest and most scrupulous honor and virtue,"<sup>3</sup> for it is only by keeping one's character immaculate, that he can be insured against the attacks of defamation and calumny.<sup>4</sup>

"Your moral character must be not only pure, but --<sup>5</sup> unsuspected", therefore extreme care is necessary, not only in your own conduct, but also in those things in other people's conduct of which you seem to approve.<sup>5</sup>

You should "never avow, excuse, extenuate or laugh at

1. Son-Sayle-98.

2. Son-Bradshaw-300.

3. Son-Sayle-9.

4. Chesterfield's Letters,  
Sent. Max. Howard, 10th Amer. Ed. 198,  
also Son-Sayle-149.

5. Son-Sayle-145.



the least breach of morality; but show upon all occasions--- a detestation and abhorrence of it"<sup>1</sup> for the world judges from the appearances of things, and not from the reality, which few are able, and still fewer are inclined, to fathom."<sup>2</sup>

So necessary is this reputation for good character, that Chesterfield thought that a person with even very dissolute morals, if he were wise, would make pretensions at having good ones,<sup>3</sup> and indeed, "if in any case whatsoever, affectation and ostentation are pardonable, it is in the case of morality,<sup>3</sup> which nobody can afford to be without entirely.

The moral virtues which Chesterfield praises especially, are those shining ones of Humanity, Benevolence, and Truth.

The Humanity which he wishes his son to have, is that broad love for his fellow men which will enable him to treat them all as he would wish to be treated himself.<sup>4</sup> This is the foundation of good manners. To his inferiors, and servants, it makes him kind and gentle, to his superiors, respectful; and to his equals, it will make him agreeable. One who is filled with Humanity will use his wit to please, but not to hurt,<sup>5</sup> and will in every way try to add to the happiness, not the discomfiture of others

1. Son-Bradshaw-343.

2. Son-Sayle-257.

3. Ibid-146.

4. Godson-I, 190.

5. Son-Bradshaw-



This feeling will be expressed in benevolence and charity, which will be given willingly and graciously, in such a manner that the recipients will feel not insulted, but rather, grateful for them.<sup>1</sup>

Chesterfield is usually represented by critics as a hard-hearted, cynical man of the world; and such he does often appear. But that his heart was not closed to all the gentler and virtuous feelings of man, is occasionally shown in his Letters. The following is an example of his Humanity: "Si je pouvois empecher qu'il n'y eut un seul malheureux sur la Terre," he says in a letter to his godson, "j'y sacrifierois avec plaisir mon bien, mes soins, et même ma santé, et j'espere et même je croy que vous feriez, la même chose".<sup>2</sup> The doing of good to others and making them happier is one of the greatest of our pleasures, he says. "When I have done what I ought to have done --- to my fellow-creatures,-I have felt more real and solid pleasure than in all the (commonly called) pleasures of dissipation."<sup>3</sup>

He advises his son to take time for self-conversation,-one half hour every evening to recapitulate what he has done during the day, and to consider in what ways he has helped others. This will suggest other ways in which he could do so, and will make him both better and wiser.<sup>4</sup>

1. Godson-II-82.

2. Godson-I-236.

3. Godson-II-267.

4. Son-Sayle-271.





Truth is the virtue which Chesterfield emphasises more than any other. One reason for this is probably because he saw a tendency in his son toward prevarication, which he was anxious to correct: and besides, the subject is worthy in itself, of an important place in moral teachings. Strict truth is necessary from a gentleman at all times. His mere word should be as good as his oath, and pass current everywhere. A single lie is enough to blacken a man's character forever,<sup>1</sup> if it is discovered, as in all probability it will be, if told. Besides, the deed in itself is contrary to the underlying principle of all morality — that of love for one's fellow men—as it usually proceeds from either malice or vanity.

The reputation for veracity is so necessary in practical life, that Chesterfield says he, personally, would not run the risk of being thought to tell a lie, by telling a story of great improbability, even if he knew it to be true.<sup>2</sup>

Dissimulation he does not class as lying. It is in no way criminal, but rather, praiseworthy under many circumstances. It consists simply in concealing a part of the truth, all of which it is seldom necessary or expedient to tell.<sup>3</sup> Simulation, on the other hand, is pretending something is true which is really false; and it is as base as lying is.

1. Godson-II-270.

2. Son-Sayle-148.

3. Son-Sayle-147.



Those vices which Chesterfield warns his son against are the most flagrant ones of his time -- drunkenness, gaming, swearing, and all kinds of immorality. In all things he preached temperance, and a breach of this in anything he thought was immoral. Drunkenness he considered as an evil and a crime,<sup>1</sup> which will ruin both the constitution and the understanding of the person who indulges in it.<sup>2</sup> Chesterfield was one of the ardent speakers in the House of Lords against a Gin Bill which was being proposed. He held that drunkenness ought to be prohibited instead of taxed, and in the course of this famous speech he says, "I hope those, to whose care the religion of the nation is particularly consigned, will unanimously join with me in maintaining the necessity, not of taxing vice, but suppressing it, and unite in rejecting a bill, by which the future, as well as the present happiness of thousands must be destroyed."<sup>1</sup> A glass or two of wine at table was, by everybody in that age, held to be perfectly harmless, but anything more, Chesterfield thought was indecent and harmful.

Gaming, also, he denounced, as being both immoral and wasteful. Swearing, he considered a crime before God; and also the mark of a low and vulgar education.<sup>3</sup> This attitude toward swearing was almost unique at his time, when nearly everybody was wont to intersperse their

1. Maty I-248-Speech on Gin Bill.

2. Son-Bradshaw-133.

3. Godson-II-10.





conversation with expressions which would be shocking to modern ears. Duelling was another common custom of the time which received his disapprobation,<sup>1</sup> and which he often ridicules. Corruption in office and political bribery are also practices to which he teaches his son to be immune.

The excessive pride of family and rank of some of his contemporaries, is a fault which he ridicules, in an admirable way, Horace Walpole tells us, by placing among the portraits of his ancestors two old heads on which he inscribed "Adam de Stanhope and Eve de Stanhope", as a proof of the antiquity of his family.<sup>2</sup> He frequently warns his godson, who is to be his heir, that if he wishes to be respected and loved, he must wear his title "as if he had it not."<sup>3</sup>

That part of his training for which Chesterfield has been more often abused than for any other thing in his Letters is his lenient attitude toward the Gallantries which were the common practice of the day. This attitude is explained, although not excused, by the low moral standard of the 18th century along such lines. He, who was not free from such vices himself, realized that his son was strongly addicted to pleasures of such sort, and that it would perhaps be entirely useless for him to object to such connections altogether, even if he deemed it necessary;

1. Son-Bradshaw-215.

2. Walpole's Letters; Ed. Toynbee Vol. III, p. 11.

3. Godson II-210.



he therefore attempted only to keep his son from low dissipation, and to direct his attention if possible to a connection with a cultured Iphigenia, who would improve his manners,<sup>1</sup> and at the same time, the connection would carry no marks of infamy about it.<sup>2</sup> His teaching, of course, cannot be excused, but it ought not be judged too harshly, when we remember that many of the English and most of the French writers of the time are subject to the same faults.

Another moral fault which he is often accused of, is his advice not to trust anybody, more than is absolutely necessary,<sup>3</sup> and his adherence to the theory of LaRochefoucauld that the motive of most of our actions is self-love.<sup>4</sup> These ideas may, indeed, sound harsh to theoretical moralists; but Chesterfield was none such. He was, above all, a Man of the World, and in his personal experience in the world he had found certain things to be true, which he wished to impress upon his son, to help him in his ministerial life. Indeed, we must remember that instructions to a person meant to fill the character of a foreign minister, must not come from the school of Zeno.<sup>5</sup> Such instructions, although beautiful, could have little practical value, and it was for use, not theory, that these principles were given.

1. Son-Bradshaw-531.

2. Ibid-327.

3. Ibid-32.

4. Ibid-140.

5. Son-Bradshaw; XXVII Charlemont's Introduction.





Closely akin to the subject of Morality is that of legitimate pleasures. For, as every virtue has its kindred vice, so "every pleasure has its neighboring disgrace,"<sup>1</sup> and for that reason, it is necessary to mark carefully the line that separates them, and rather stop a yard short than step an inch beyond it."<sup>1</sup>

Chesterfield did not wish to prohibit pleasure — far from it. His purpose was to point it out and recommend it, like an Epicurean, rather than to snarl at it like a Stoic.<sup>2</sup> But he wanted to personally direct the boy's pleasures, to be sure that they were rational ones, and that he did not carry them over the line into Disgraces. "Pleasure" he says, "is the rock which most young people split upon: they launch out with crowded sails in quest of it, but without a compass to steer the vessel; for want of which, pain and shame instead of Pleasure, are the returns of their voyage."<sup>2</sup> He offered his experience as the compass necessary for the boy's voyage in his search for real pleasures.

The rational pleasures are those which are really enjoyable to the person who partakes of them, and which are carried on with decency and moderation so that they detract neither from the reputation nor from the health of the person.<sup>3</sup> Those pleasures which are of use in improving the body or mind, are also rational ones.

1. Son-Sayle-157.

2. Ibid. 32.

3. Son-Sayle-34.





"A pleasure" he says, "which does not contribute to the force or the address of the body, nor amuse the mind is a very ridiculous, not to say foolish pleasure."<sup>1</sup> Those pleasures which are original usually give more amusement than borrowed ones; and one should not make the mistake of hurrying into the so-called "fashionable pleasures" if they are not entertaining to him, simply because other people practice them. "Choose your pleasures for yourself, and do not let them be imposed upon you. Follow nature, not fashion", and in connection with those which are attended by ill consequences, "weigh the present enjoyment against the necessary consequences of them, and let your own common sense determine your choice."<sup>2</sup>

As all pleasures become disgraceful if carried too far, it is necessary to observe moderation and temperance in all things. "Ne quid nimis" is an excellent maxim to observe, he thinks. It is characteristic of a sound and strong mind to find exactly where the boundary is, and to keep within it.<sup>3</sup>

Drinking and gaming have already been mentioned, as being immoral, nay, even disgraceful and criminal, if carried too far: yet a certain amount of each is permissible in compliance with the demands of good company. Eating, even, if marked with indiscriminate voraciousness, is disgraceful, and gluttonous.<sup>4</sup>

1. Godson I-208.

2. Son-Sayle-33.

3. Son-Sayle-97.

4. Son-Bradshaw-319.



Chesterfield, who was very much of a Frenchman in his tastes, held the French views concerning the English sports. He considered them all "ungentlemanlike" and did not wish his boy ever to take part in fox hunting,<sup>1</sup> horse racing, or any kind of field sports. The more graceful accomplishments of Riding, Dancing and Fencing were proper exercises for a young man, and would give him grace and dexterity of movement. Cricket he classes with pitch-farthing, as a mere child's game; and chess, he thought would be a good game for a young boy, to accustom him to "attention, combinations and thinking forwards",<sup>2</sup> and also to keep him out of dangerous games of chance.<sup>2</sup>

Attending the theatre, and seeing well written plays, is not only a good amusement, but is also valuable as an educational force.<sup>3</sup>

The greatest of all pleasures,<sup>4</sup> though, the one that is the "Refuge of a rational being"<sup>5</sup> at vacant hours every day, is Reading. This, and the conversation with people of sense, are the two pleasures which one should most cultivate, as they will be enjoyable throughout life, and will give a rational man more real pleasure than any of the other so-called pleasures.

Mere idleness ought never to be considered a pleasure. One should be doing something, and something with a definite

1. Godson, II-167; 200

2. A.C. Stanhope (Oxford '90) 337.

3. A.C. Stanhope, 373.

4. Godson, II-38.

5. Son-Sayle-246.





end, every minute. Rest, he does not, however, consider as idleness.

That person who makes Pleasure his vocation, usually fails in attaining it: "Pleasure-cannot be the business of a man of sense and character; but it may be, and is, his relief and reward."<sup>1</sup> Only by one who turns from the cares of business to the joys of pleasure, can it be truly enjoyed. "They whet the desire for each other",<sup>2</sup> and thus make each more valuable, than it would be alone.

1. Letters, Sentences & Maxims, Howard-232.

2. Son-Sayle-266.



MANNERS, AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD.

We now come to that part of Chesterfield's teaching, which is more widely known than any other thing in his Letters -- his careful training of his son in good manners. So much emphasis does he lay upon this subject, that to one who has merely glanced over his "Letters to His Son", his teaching seems to be concerned almost wholly with questions of conduct and manners. For this reason, as well as for the fact that his own manners were the exemplary ones of his age, his name has come to be inseparably associated with the thought of excellent, or even fastidious manners, and many people have not realized that his teaching went any deeper. The preceding chapters have, I believe, shown that his system of education includes all of the essential elements of other systems, and in the present chapter I will treat very briefly his salient ideas on good-breeding, manners and knowledge of the world.

The important place which this subject holds in his letters is, I think, explainable in two ways, both of which are important to remember. First, his son needed instruction in manners far more than in any other thing, for we are told that he was a studious boy, fond of books, and capable of learning readily; and he naturally had good morals, so that he was in need of little advice upon such subjects; but



in manners, and general air, he was sadly lacking in grace and ease, and sometimes even in the desire of observing such things at all; so naturally, the father, who considered them necessary, and of prime importance, tried every way in his power to impress upon his son their importance. He fondly believed that his son had or was on the way of having, everything else that was necessary,<sup>1</sup> and so anxious was he to have him perfect, that he spared no effort to inculcate into him, the desire for, and knowledge of, the best manners.

The second reason for the frequency of these teachings is that this was Chesterfield's special province allotted to himself, for personal instructions, in the boy's education. We find from his letters that he trusted capable masters with his education in all lines of classical and modern learning; and his moral and religious duties were taught him by the clergyman who was his guide and tutor while abroad; these things he thought others could teach him better than himself. But Chesterfield, who was then, and has ever since been, considered the very paragon of good breeding and manners, believed that he could teach those subjects better than most other people, therefore he undertook the personal direction of them. The advice upon the other subjects which Chesterfield touches in his letters is meant only to emphasize and add to, the knowledge of them which the boy got from other

1. Son-Bradshaw-263.





sources. But his instruction in manners, is meant to be sufficiently complete in itself to make clear to a boy both the necessity and the knowledge of the manners of polite society.

The manners which Chesterfield strove to teach his son have been unjustly summed up by his enemy Johnson, as the "manners of a dancing master."<sup>1</sup> This opinion is the one commonly accepted today, on the authority of the great critic, but it seems to have been actuated by a spirit of malice alone. For Chesterfield insisted upon being understood that his idea of good breeding did not consist in "low bows and formal ceremony, but in an easy, civil, and respectful behaviour."<sup>2</sup> Good breeding is only "to be civil, and to be civil with ease,"<sup>3</sup> and is "the result of much good sense, some good nature, and a little self-denial, for the sake of others, and with a view to obtain the same indulgence from them."<sup>4</sup> The ease, gracefulness and dignity which compose the air and address of a man of Fashion, --- is as unlike the "affected attitudes and motions of a 'petit maître', as it is to the awkward, negligent, clumsy and slouching manners of a booby."<sup>5</sup>

Mere civility is not sufficient; for "everybody must

1. Boswell's Life of Johnson-Ed. G.B. Hill-Oxford, 1887,  
Vol. I, p 266.

2. Dublin University Magazine-July, 1875. p 60.

3. Son-Sayle-8.

4. Son-Bradshaw-264.

5. Son-Sayle-164.



have that, who would not be kicked out of company,"<sup>1</sup> but beyond that, it is necessary to have shining and insinuating manners, to make one agreeable to others. For good breeding, alone, says Chesterfield, can make a man loved; great talents may make him famous, and great knowledge, respected; but it is impossible to love him unless he has good manners.<sup>2</sup> A man with large parts and knowledge may, like a rough diamond, have great intrinsic value; but he will never be truly enjoyed until he has been polished. This polishing will make all his excellencies shine forth, and will cover most of his faults.<sup>3</sup>

More important even than in other places, is good breeding in court life. Here especially, it is impossible to succeed, without having shining manners. And these manners are as essential to the minister, as to the professional courtier.

He must be able to please people, at first sight, by his grace and address. Then by his politeness, and insinuating manner he should attach himself to their hearts, and enter their confidences. If he is able to do this, he will be a successful minister, and one of great use to his country; for princes treat much more favorably with those

1. Son-Bradshaw-204.

2. Katy-I-206-The World.

3. Katy I-204, The World.





ministers who are personally attractive to them, than with those whom they do not like. In ministerial life above almost all others, captivating ornaments must assist merit and sense; for the latter are almost helpless alone. The ornaments "do half the business."

Good manners, in general, consist of little more than the "art of Pleasing." This is made up of a large number of things, all of which taken together form an agreeable whole. Chief among these are "the Graces" and that indefinable "Je ne sais quoi", which everybody feels, though nobody can describe.<sup>1</sup> It is "a compound of all the agreeable qualities of body and mind in which no one of them predominates in such a manner as to give exclusion to any other."<sup>2</sup>

"A thousand little things, not separately to be defined, conspire to form these Graces, this 'je ne sais quoi' that always pleases."<sup>3</sup> Something graceful, genteel and engaging in the air and figure;<sup>4</sup> a pretty person, graceful motions, a proper degree of dress, an harmonious voice, a cheerful and open countenance, a distinct and properly varied manner of speaking, and many other things combined, form the whole, which is irresistible.<sup>3</sup> Within proper limits, much more is due to the manner of performing than to the thing done.

1. Son-Sayle-68.

2. Godson-II, 215.

3. Son-Sayle-68.

4. Godson-II, 119.



The means of acquiring this enviable quality is, first of all, having a great desire to please. This desire will readily suggest many means of gratification, and if combined with the observation of the actions of shining and pleasing characters, to see what makes them pleasing, it will insensibly give one many of the Graces which are desired and imitated. But in the imitation of shining characters, one should be very careful to copy only their pleasing characteristics and not their faults: for no person is wholly good, nor worthy of imitation in every particular.

The observation of certain ceremonies is necessary, both because they give grace, and because one must know how to do them well, when the occasion demands. Such is dancing. In itself it is a foolish custom, yet it is almost a disgrace not to be able to dance gracefully when called upon to do so by the demands of society. Careful instruction in dancing is necessary, also, because of the grace which it gives the whole body; for in learning to dance, one should also learn to sit, stand and walk correctly, and to present himself gracefully in company.

Dress, is in itself a foolish thing to spend much time over, yet it is a disgrace not to be as well dressed as other people of your station are. Neither should one be conspicuous by being overdressed; the clothes should be of good material, and fit perfectly, but should not be





adorned any more than those of other well dressed people, of your own class are. The Golden Mean ought to be followed in dress as in most other things, and you should dress so as to attract attention neither one way nor the other.

Another thing which adds to one's attractiveness is extreme cleanliness of person, and tidiness of hair, nails, etc. All these things are relatively unimportant in themselves, but when taken together help form a pleasing whole.

In his conversation, a man is more apt to be displeasing than in any other way. He should therefore carefully cultivate his ability in that line, and build up a harmonious voice, pleasing articulation, and good conversational style. He should free himself from vulgarisms of speech, and from unpleasant habits of speaking, such as quarreling, swearing, arguing, and the use of personal satire. He should avoid personal allusions and long stories, and in short, anything which would be tiresome and disinteresting to the hearers. He must be as willing to listen, as to talk, and must never in any way try to monopolize the conversation. He should not even try to give the tone to the conversation, nor lead to a subject in which he can display his own talents, but follow respectfully where other people lead, unless indeed it be onto forbidden ground. Such in brief, are the rules for conversation which Chesterfield gives his son to follow, if he wishes to be particularly pleasing in it.





In all things you must have great care not to hurt other people's feelings, in actions, speech or lack of attention to them while speaking. Not only this, but you should try to please them, by thinking of little things for the gratification of their desires and their comfort. All these things are very easy, if one is really actuated by the desire of pleasing, and they are more easy still, if behind that desire there is love for your fellow-men, and the sincere wish to treat everybody as you yourself would like to be treated. But even though such moral sentiments are absent, the actions themselves are still necessary, of everybody, in order to make a world which we would wish to live in.

This world, complicated as it is by having people of different temperaments, and those who conceal their real feelings, by polite actions, is difficult to understand. Yet the knowledge of it is highly necessary for one who has his life to live in the midst of it, especially in a position in which he will come in contact with many of these characters, and need to understand them.

A true knowledge of the character of men, Chesterfield believed, is worth more to a future minister of state, than all the book knowledge he could ever have. It is for this reason principally that he sends him abroad, where he will see many different men, and especially men of court life, who, because they dissimulate their true feelings most, are therefore the most complex and most difficult to read. So varied are the characters to be found at the Courts, that Chesterfield believed his son could there find examples of all kinds, and



obtain a correct knowledge of the world such as he could get in no other place.

He is anxious to help his son obtain a true knowledge of the character and the ways of the world, by giving him the result of his own discerning sight and long experience. The maxims and observations on character with which his letters are filled might well have come from the pen of Rochefoucauld; and some of them indeed, have almost the sound of LaBruyère. Chesterfield was not, however, a hater of mankind; but his keen discernment and observation had taught him many things concerning character which, although not pleasing, are true, and therefore helpful, to one starting out in the world without experience.

After obtaining a knowledge of character, the next necessary quality for one who is to live a public life is to "avoir du monde" himself. This is the happy expression which Chesterfield uses to include address, manners, and a knowledge of the proper usage of all companies, to which is added the knowledge of one's own interests. It consists, first of all, in the absolute control over yourself--both in temper and in countenance. Real secrecy, but seeming frankness of speech, and dissimulation of real motives for action are necessary, in order to reconcile the demands of society with self interest. A sense of the fitness of things, and the ability to distinguish between difficulties and impossibilities mark the man who has wide experience in the world. These, with his knowledge of man, by which he is enabled to read the character and search out the ruling passion of a person, are of great use to





a minister, who will have demands to make of others. A pleasing and insinuating manner is also valuable to him; and for this, he must have great politeness, grace and modesty. Toward all things not wrong in themselves, he should have great versatility, and be able to change his attitude toward them at the pleasure of others.

These qualities and many others of like nature go to make up the man of the world, the man who knows human nature to its depths, knows how to please it, and for that reason, by his acquiescence to its humors in small things, obtains his reward by securing his own will in the larger interests of life. They are the qualities in which Chesterfield had long since perfected himself, and the ones which he desired his son to cultivate, as being the most essential of all the attributes of a man who lives among men.

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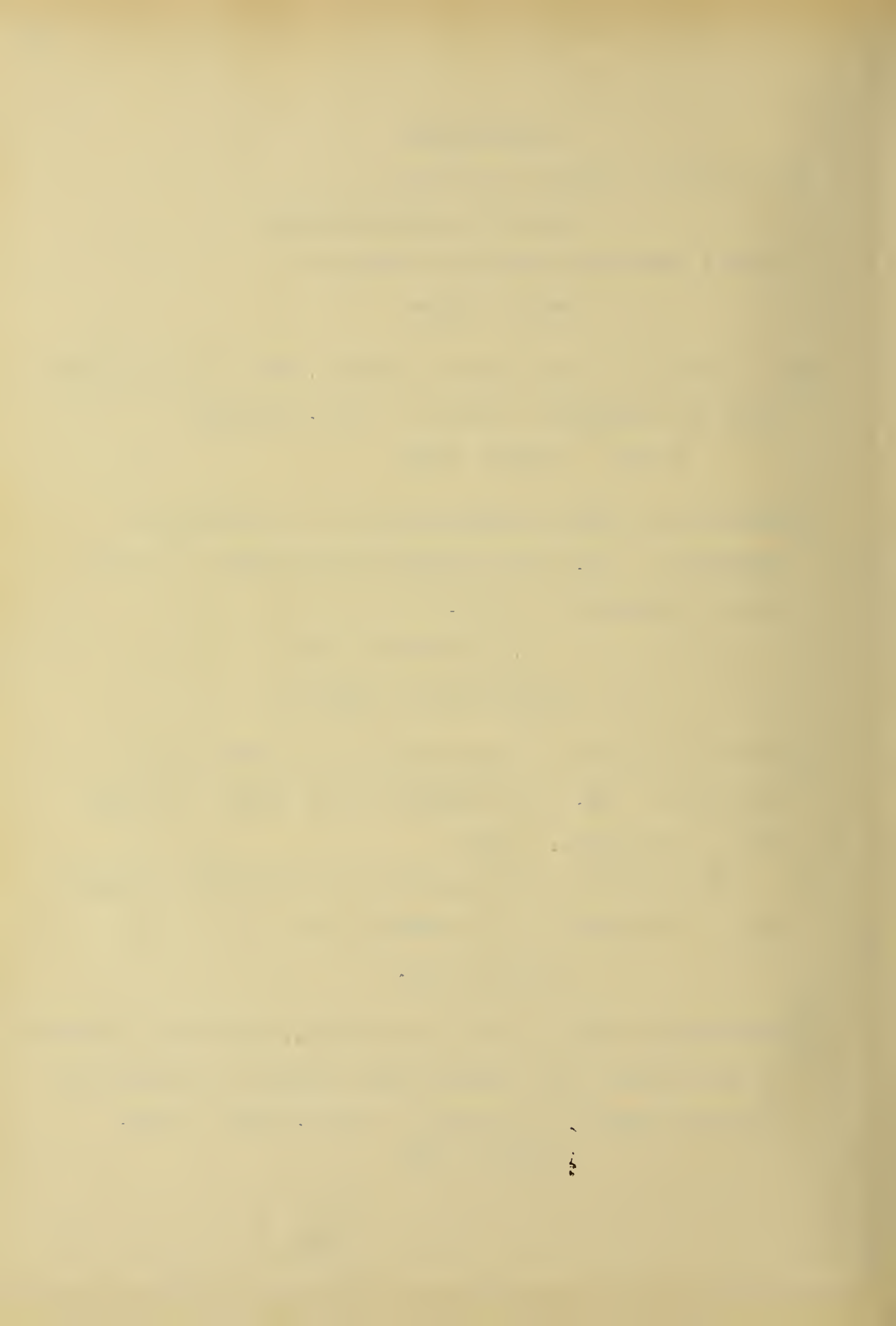
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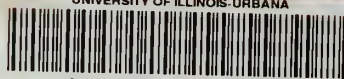








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